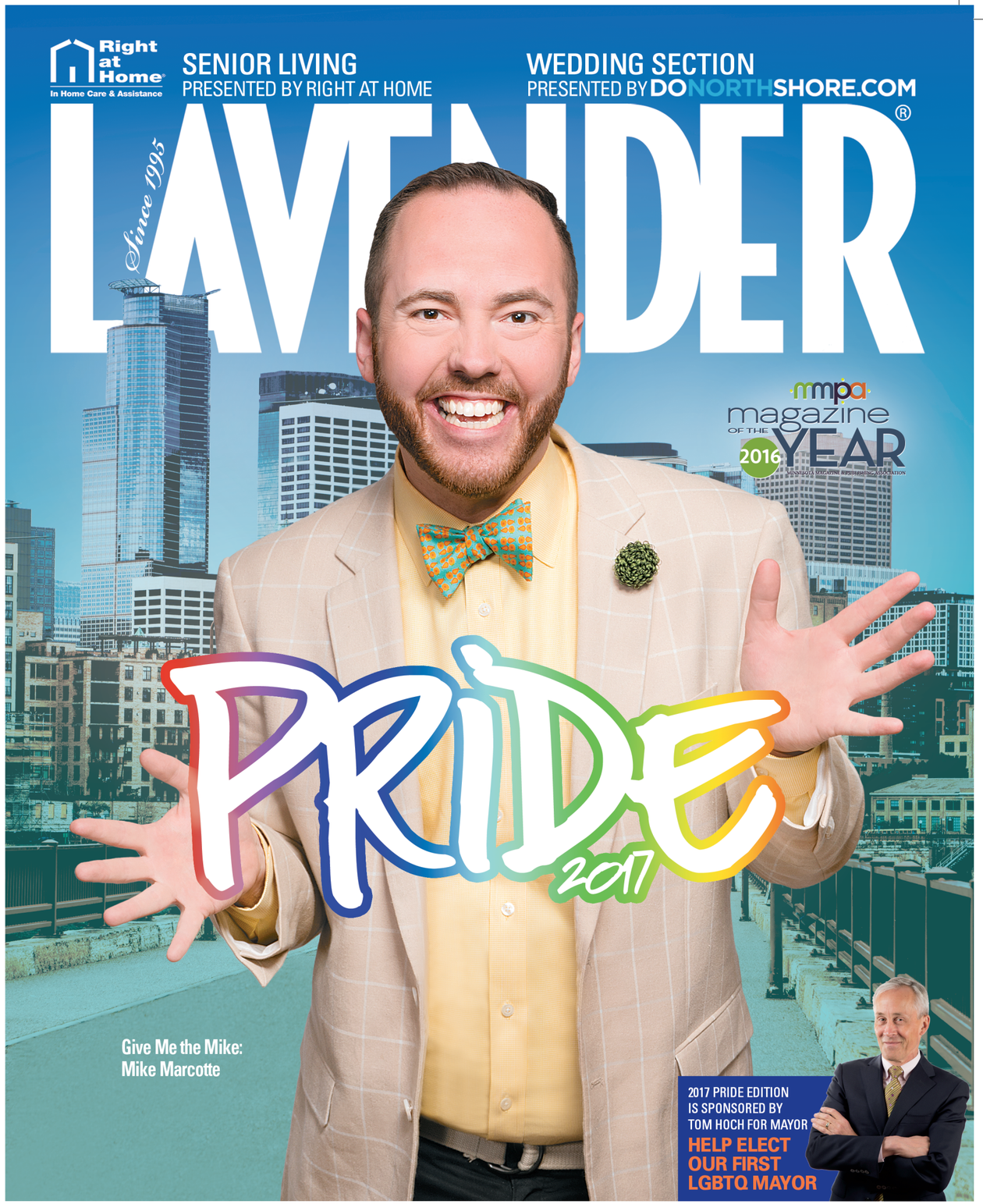
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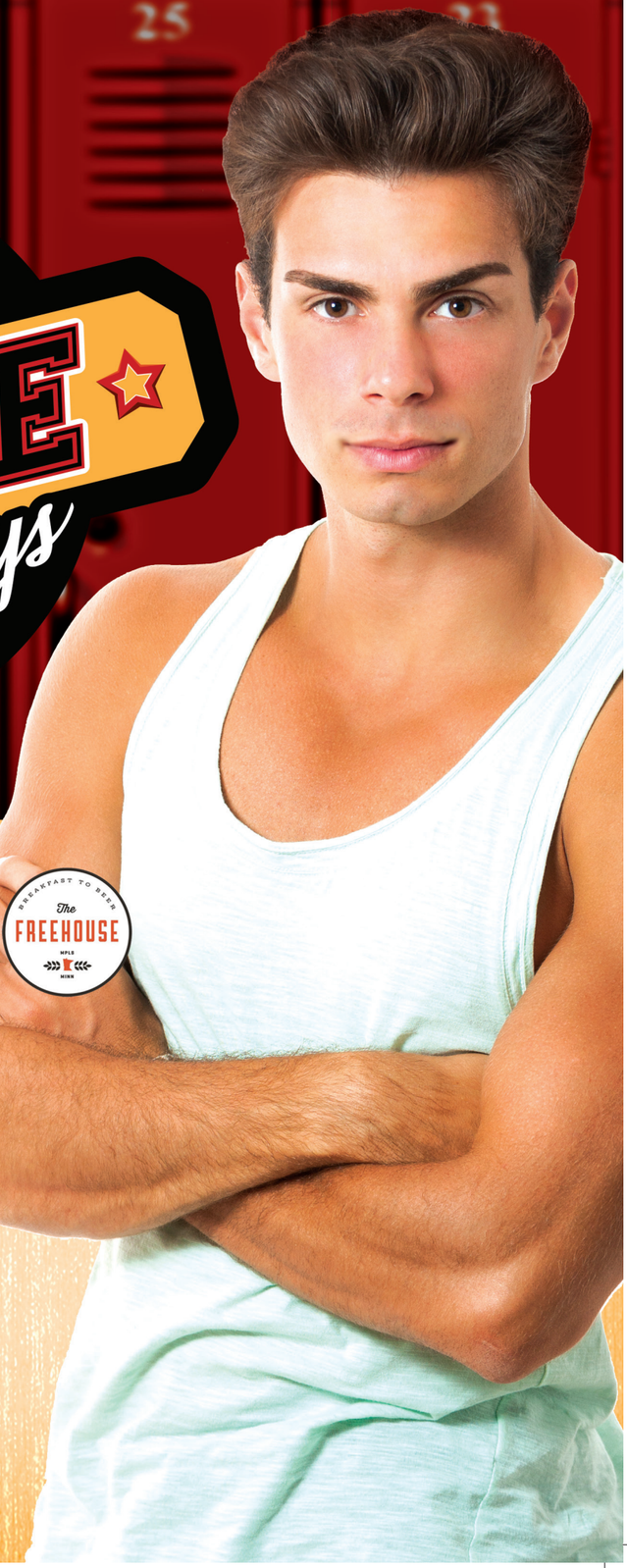
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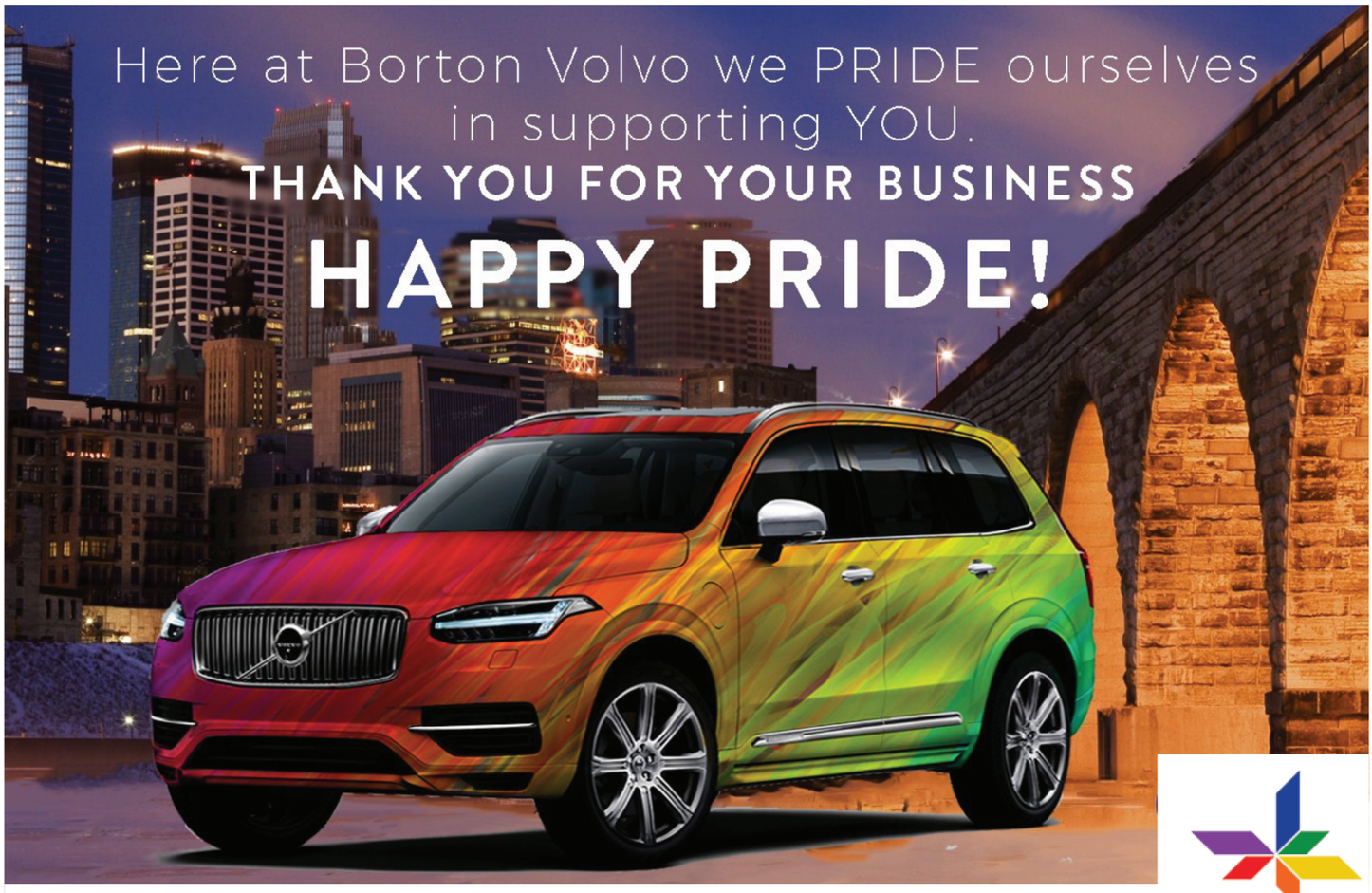
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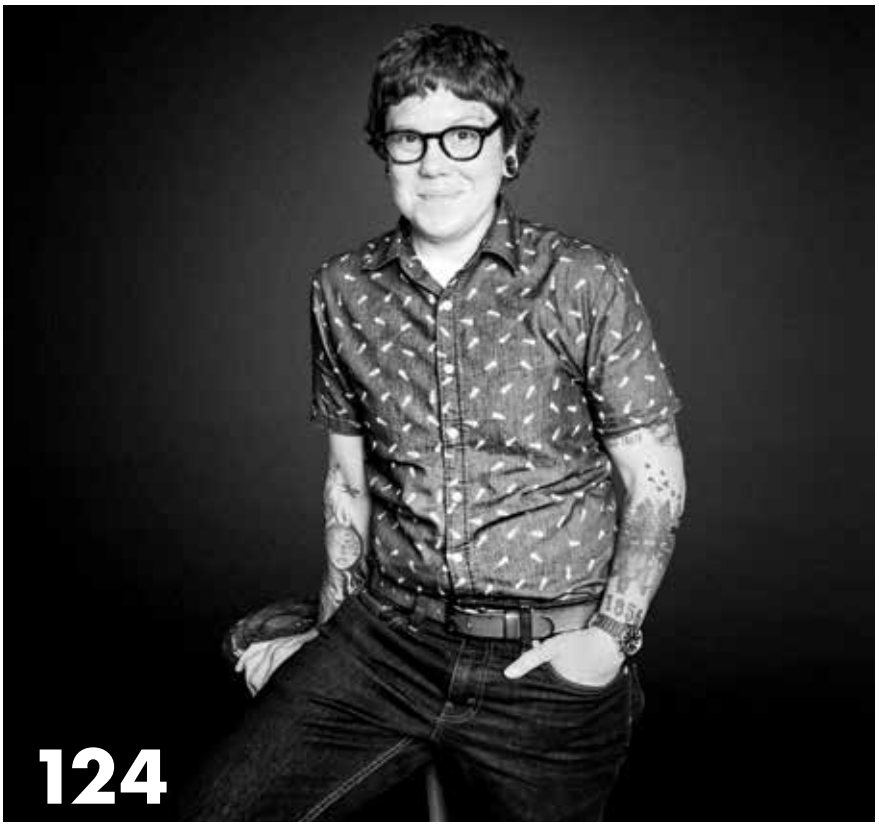


Photo by Brent Dundore Photography

ON THE COVER
The 2017 Pride Issue brings colors and smiles to this Pride season, featuring Mike Marcotte and the artwork of Brent Dundore Photography.

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FROM THE EDITOR

By Andy Lien

Happy Pride!

Welcome to *Lavender*'s biggest issue of the year! We've got pages of people, organizations, articles, celebrations, advertisers, and well-wishers for you...all for the low price of free. Free for the pickup, free for the download, and free for archival online. We are so thrilled to provide this magazine to the community, whether folks are in the closet or have been living out and proud longer than Pride's been celebrated in the Twin Cities. We hope you find yourself somewhere in the pages of our issues. That something piques your interest. That you learn something you didn't know. That you encounter a person who's new to you. That you find community in our pages and on our website. It's why we're here.

We're also here to make sure you know who supports you in the community — our advertisers are more than just the companies that allow us to give this magazine to you for free, they're letting you know that they support you and want your business too. So, when you see a magazine of this size with this number of companies choosing to advertise in it, please know that it's a pretty impressive show of support for us as a magazine and us as a community. And that feels good.

This issue is all of our usual sections combined in one place. It's what we usually split up across the editorial calendar throughout the year. You'll find bars, arts, food, travel, sports, columns, fashion, dating, weddings, health, senior living, pets, children and family, community, international affairs, homes, and vehicles, as well as special coverage of Twin Cities Pride. Also look for additional coverage of Pride in our next issue, the Pride Weekend Issue.

I want to thank all of the people who answer "yes" when I contact them for collaboration or inclusion in our issues, especially the Pride Issue. It is such a feel-good project, and the people make all of it so worthwhile. From our team at Lavender Media to the photographers and writers and producers and subjects and advertisers, this is something that is built by this community, for this community.

I hope you feel it. I hope you know that though Pride would still happen without this Pride Issue, we hope this helps you feel pride about the community you live in and choose to engage with. We are nothing without this community, and that's the truth.

Be healthy, be happy, enjoy Pride...and enjoy this Pride Issue. I'll see you out there.

With love and thanks,

Andy ■





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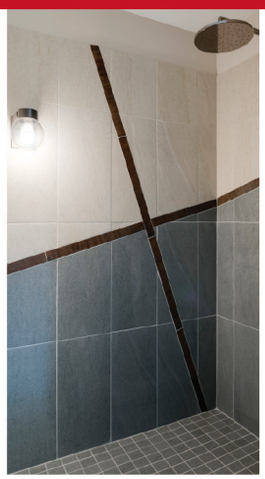
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PRIDE

By Andy Lien



On the Cover

Over the past few years, we've had entertainers and personalities on the cover, both familiar and celebrity faces. This cover is featuring a local community member, a writer and producer, someone who's often behind the scenes but is now emerging a bit more. He's written a number of pieces for us and has been writing online for various outlets for years. He's been known as a "Local Guy About Town," but now is asking folks to "Give Me The Mike." His name is Mike Marcotte and he's just one of the neatest guys around.

Currently a producer for *Twin Cities Live* at KSTP-TV, plenty of people know Mike's friendly face and open demeanor, whether they see him in person or on television. He's a social networking master. He volunteers for various nonprofits and causes, and currently serves on the board of directors of the Minnesota Boychoir. He's a millennial who's extremely engaged and interested. Born and raised in the metro area, Mike represents Minnesota well as he travels to various places, writing pieces on other areas worth visiting. He's an ambassador of sorts, both for our state and for our community. Whether he's here or there, you want to follow him and hear what he's got to say. Read about his recent trip to Provincetown on page 78, and find more of Mike's work at www.givemethemike.com.

I'd also like to highlight that this cover is an artistic vision of Brent Dundore, who's a photographer from and of this community. Through his company, Brent Dundore Photography, he took an idea for featuring Mike and his city in a young, vibrant, and Pride-ful way and ran with it. As an artist who gives of himself to present the entire rainbow of this community with projects like the "Marry Us Campaign," "Why I Ride" for the Red Ribbon Ride, and the "They/Them Project" on page 124, I am thrilled that we got to collaborate with him on this Pride Issue cover.

Thank you, Mike and Brent. Keep it up. ■

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A WORD IN EDGEWISE

By E.B. Boatner

Nevertheless...

"Nevertheless, she persisted," has become a mantra urging women to stand against discrimination or bullying. Nevertheless, is also a powerful shield for any individual or group facing long odds, from society, ill health, or other adversary.

Author Laura Hillenbrand celebrated "nevertheless" in her best-selling novels *Seabiscuit: An American Legend* and *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*. While the books themselves were uplifting, readers may not realize that Hillenbrand herself had followed personal "nevertheless" to write at all. While at college, she contracted chronic fatigue syndrome that forced her to withdraw before graduation. Confined to her house for decades, her research was accomplished through old newspaper clips, her writing was a painful line-by-line process on days she was able to work at all. Still. She persisted.

Over the past years, during our lifetimes, GLBT individuals have come to have the same rights open to other Americans. Recently there has been an upsurge against equal treatment, and it is well to remember that in whatever quarter, change has never proceeded in a straight, untroubled line. There have been, and will be, setbacks and challenges, discrimination, and hateful speech and actions. Whatever word one chooses, pick your "nevertheless" and keep going forward.

Starting with Unitarian minister Theodore Parker in an 1853 sermon titled, "Of Justice and the Conscience," and reworked in our time by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with his words, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice," have moved many and helped to strengthen wills in times of doubt and distress.

Foreshadowing the Civil War, Parker's original words were, "I do not pretend to understand the moral universe, the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways. I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. But from what I see, I am sure it bends toward justice."

And perhaps, I hope, it shall. As to what we motes can do, we can keep on celebrating life; opening our hearts to love, our minds to learning, and our energies to peacefully and normally going about our business, being seen by others as citizens living the everyday life. A life can also involve parades, balloons, rainbow beads, and gatherings to celebrate how far we've moved along the Reverends Parker and King's arc.

Wishing all a happy Pride! ■

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LAVENDER LENS

Photos by Sophia Hantzes

Lavender's Score Thursday at Union - April 20, 2017



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Photo by Sophia Hantzes

PRIDE @ MERCY.

June 16, 2017

Ryan Coit Gallery Event

ART Gallery at Mercy | 7pm-10pm
18+ | FREE Admission

June 18, 2017

MiX: DISCO!

With original Studio 54
DJ Robbie Leslie!
Rooftop at Mercy | 2pm-8pm
Special performance by Nina DiAngelo
Costume Contest | 21+ | $5 Cover

June 25, 2017

MiX: The PRIDE Parade

Mercy Rooftop Party 10th Anniversary
9am-2pm
DJ Lenka Paris
Brunch available
$5 Cover includes access to the patio party and a free* Absolut cocktail or mimosa. For reserved tables on the railing contact Mike mlaguire@mercympls.com

June 25, 2017

Saints & Sinners:

PRIDE Patio Party
Appearances by **Coco Montrese**
(from RuPaul's Drag Race Season 5)
and **Kimora Blac**
(from RuPaul's Drag Race Season 9)
9am-6pm
DJ Leif Anderson
Performances by Sunny Kiriyama, Julia Starr and more!
Brunch available til 3pm
$5 Cover includes access to the rooftop party and a free* Absolut cocktail or mimosa. For private cabana contact Mike mlaguire@mercympls.com

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Kimora Blac



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LAVENDER LENS

Photos by Sophia Hantzes

Lavender's First Thursday at Mercy – May 4, 2017































What is TRUVADA for PrEP?

TRUVADA for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a prescription medicine that is used together with safer sex practices to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This use is only for HIV-negative adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1. To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to prevent getting HIV. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA for PrEP?

Before taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must be HIV-negative before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1. Do not take TRUVADA to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting or at any time while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must continue to use safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP:**
  - Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months.
  - If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- **To further help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:**
  - Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners.
  - Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV to infect you.
  - Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior, such as having fewer sex partners.
  - Do not miss any doses of TRUVADA. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects:

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV and stop taking TRUVADA, your HBV may suddenly get worse. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to monitor your health.

Who should not take TRUVADA for PrEP?

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.** If you are HIV-1 positive, you need to take other medicines with TRUVADA to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- **Also take** certain medicines to treat hepatitis B infection.

What are the other possible side effects of TRUVADA for PrEP?

Serious side effects of TRUVADA may also include:



- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with TRUVADA. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking TRUVADA.
- **Too much lactic acid in your blood** (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- **Severe liver problems**, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- **Bone problems**, including bone pain, softening, or thinning, which may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.

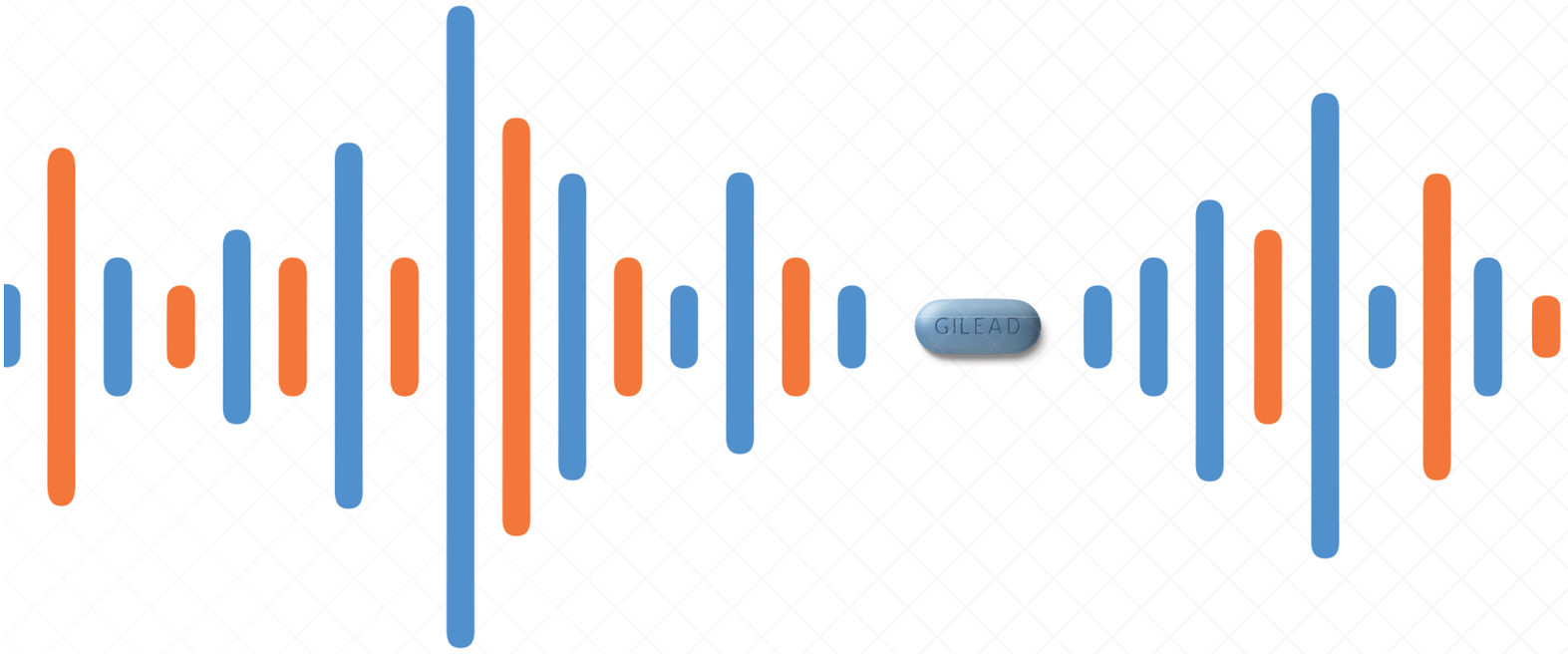
Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP are stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA for PrEP?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis.
- **If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.** It is not known if TRUVADA can harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant while taking TRUVADA for PrEP, talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep taking TRUVADA.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. If you become HIV-positive, HIV can be passed to the baby in breast milk.
- **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. TRUVADA may interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.
- **If you take certain other medicines** with TRUVADA, your healthcare provider may need to check you more often or change your dose. These medicines include certain medicines to treat hepatitis C (HCV) infection.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about TRUVADA for PrEP including important warnings on the following page.



Have you heard about

TRUVADA for PrEP™?

The **once-daily prescription medicine** that can help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 when used **with safer sex practices.**

- TRUVADA for PrEP is only for **adults who are at high risk of getting HIV through sex.**
- You **must be HIV-negative** before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Ask your doctor about your risk of getting HIV-1 infection and if TRUVADA for PrEP may be right for you.

visit **start.truvada.com**

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(tru-VAH-dah)

IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about taking TRUVADA for PrEP™ (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. This does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your medicine.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Before starting TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must be HIV-1 negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-1 negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include flu-like symptoms, tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP:

- **You must continue to use safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.** Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you think you were exposed to HIV-1 or have a flu-like illness while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- See the "How To Further Reduce Your Risk" section for more information.

TRUVADA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** TRUVADA is not approved to treat HBV. If you have HBV, your HBV may suddenly get worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA for PrEP is a prescription medicine used together with safer sex practices to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This use is only for HIV-negative adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1.

- To help determine your risk of getting HIV-1, talk openly with your healthcare provider about your sexual health.

Do NOT take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.**
- Take certain medicines to treat hepatitis B infection.

HOW TO TAKE TRUVADA FOR PrEP

- **Take 1 tablet once a day, every day**, not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.
- Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- Use TRUVADA for PrEP together with condoms and safer sex practices.
- Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months. You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About TRUVADA for PrEP" section.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious but rare medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, stomach pain with nausea and vomiting, cold or blue hands and feet, feel dizzy or lightheaded, or a fast or abnormal heartbeat.
- Severe liver problems, which in rare cases can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get these symptoms: skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, or stomach-area pain.
- Bone problems.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP include stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight.

These are not all the possible side effects of TRUVADA. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP.

BEFORE TAKING TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis.
- Have any other medical conditions.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. If you become HIV-positive, HIV can pass to the baby in breast milk.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with TRUVADA for PrEP.

HOW TO FURTHER REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Know your HIV status and the HIV status of your partners.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV to infect you.
- Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior, such as having fewer sex partners.
- Do not share needles or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about TRUVADA for PrEP. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more, including how to prevent HIV infection.
- Go to start.truvada.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit start.truvada.com for program information.

GILEAD

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Version date: April 2017

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OUR PRIDE

By Amy Brockman

EQUALITY MARCH

FOR PRIDE AND UNITY
JUNE 11, 2017



It started with someone being inspired by the Women's March and the huge numbers of people who participated all over the world. The idea for an LGBT rights march on June 11 in Washington D.C. was posted on social media by David Bruinooge on January 26 and the idea went viral.

Soon InterPride (the international Pride organization) was involved and helping to set up a national committee of people to help create this march.

InterPride requested that local pride organizations, like Twin Cities Pride, devote time and energy to create a sister march or other event that would bring the spirit of the Equality March to their areas. Twin Cities Pride is proud to have taken on this task and is working hard with community partners to create a sister march for the Twin Cities area.

On Sunday, June 11 the Twin Cities Equality March will begin at 11 a.m., with people starting to line up for the march at 10:00 a.m. The details of the march route are still being finalized as of this printing, so check www.tcpride.org or the Facebook event page for updates. There will be a rally at the State Capitol from 12 to 1:30 p.m. with a tribute to Orlando Pulse victims, plus speakers and music. After the rally ends people are encouraged to attend Golden Valley Pride (12–6 p.m.), the Telling Queer History event (2–4:30 p.m.) or, later on that evening, the Queer Prom (starts at 7:30 p.m.).

We request that people register for the Equality March at www.tcpride.org to help with planning purposes and there is also a place to donate to help cover the costs of the march. Twin Cities Pride estimates that staging, sound, bathrooms (we will have 100 port-a-potties!), and other logistics for the march and rally will total $50,000. Sales of T-shirts, co-sponsorships by organizations, and individual donations will help to cover the cost of the march. T-shirts are available for purchase online at www.tcpride.org and will also be available for purchase at the Grand Marshal Awards Reception and Art Show Opening on June 8 at Radisson RED in downtown Minneapolis from 5:30–8 p.m. T-shirts will also be available at sign-making parties and other events as posted on Facebook and at the rally on June 11.

The planning committee consists of almost 30 local activists that have met numerous times to plan the march and they developed the following mission statement:

Twin Cities Equality March inspires people of all gender and sexual identities to fight for love, justice, inclusion, and equity in a way that unites our community and creates space for people to show up as their whole, true, and authentic selves.

The committee also developed a 13-point platform for the Twin Cities sister march, available for viewing at www.tcpride.org and on the Facebook event page. The goals of the national march include using the Equality March for Unity and Pride, and sister events across the country, to give voice to our concerns, and to support, uplift, and bring attention to those in our communities who are targeted due to immigration status, ethnicity, religion, skin color, gender, and disability. The platform for our local march echoes this sentiment.

So, what do else do you need to know?

Who Should Attend: Everyone who is LGBTQ and allies to our community are welcome! Adults and children are welcome. We intend for this event to be welcoming for all people that support our rights and our community. For those of you who have longed to have the Pride parade be more of a protest march, this event is perfect for you!

Transportation and Parking: We recommend that as many people as possible take public transit to the march and rally. If you want to drive, we recommend parking near the Capitol and then walking or taking public transit to the start of the march. For the rally, the Capitol is on many bus lines and the Green Line.

What to Bring: Please bring plenty of water, snacks, and sunscreen. This is a zero-waste event, so plan on packing up any trash you make! We will have free water available at the rally to refill your water bottles. Remember to dress for the weather, wear comfortable shoes, and bring signs for the march — we hope to see some good ones!

There will be a disability seating area at the rally and sign language interpreters. If you have any questions about the Equality March or rally, please reach out to Twin Cities Pride at 612-255-3260 or info@tcpride.org. ■

OUR PRIDE

By Amy Brockman

TWIN CITIES

PRIDE IS LISTENING



Photo by RJL Photography

After the Pride Festival wrapped up last year, Twin Cities Pride got a lot of feedback from people in the queer and transgender people of color (POC) communities about some negative experiences people had during Pride.

In response to this feedback, TC Pride hosted two listening sessions in December for the queer and transgender POC community that were facilitated by Dr. Joi Lewis. In these listening sessions the voices of people of color were centered, allowing them to really be heard in a new way by Twin Cities Pride staff and board members.

One thing that was brought up was that the policing and security at the Pride Festival was hard for the transgender and POC communities. Since the attack on Pulse in Orlando happened just two weeks before Pride, extra police were added to the security measures for the Festival in 2016. This may have made white people feel safer, but it definitely made transgender people and the POC community feel much less safe.

Another issue that was brought up by transgender and gender nonconforming participants was their experience of being misgendered by people throughout the festival, at exhibitor booths and food vendors alike. There were also instances of insensitive or transphobic comments made by people at the festival. Instead of Pride being an extra-safe space for transgender people to be themselves, to some the festival definitely felt like a place where they felt misunderstood or ridiculed.

There were also feelings about the People to People (P2P) Stage where the POC community felt like the placement of the stage was putting them off in a corner of the park. Roxanne Anderson from RARE Productions started the P2P stage over 15 years ago and the location of the stage moved to the current spot in 2010. The P2P Stage is located here because it gives the audience more space to sit in the grass and it faces away from other stages, providing a better sound experience for the P2P audience. This year we will be adding an area of food vendors to this area, making it feel like more of a destination to relax.

There was a perception that musicians of color were only allowed to perform on the P2P stage, but not allowed on the other stages. While RARE Productions does mentor young musicians of color and give them a space to perform on the P2P Stage, once these musicians are more experienced they are moved to other stages throughout the festival. There are people of color performing on all stages and Twin Cities Pride aims to communicate better about who these people are and when they are playing through pictures of all performers on their website and mobile app. Also to note that all performers were paid last year through a grant from the State of Minnesota Arts Board. While this money is not guaranteed every year, Twin Cities Pride did receive a grant for the 2017 Pride Festival and will again be able to pay all performers on every stage!

And finally there were concerns brought up about people with disabilities, especially more invisible disabilities like autism, and how more accommodations could be made for this community.

From all of this feedback, Twin Cities Pride is adding in some things this year to the Pride celebration. First, TC Pride is rolling out a new LGBTQ training module that all people who have a booth at Pride, plus food vendors, EMTs, security officers, and police will need to participate in before the weekend of the Pride Festival. Most of this training will be online, with the option to attend an in-person training if they would like. The LGBTQ training will also be incorporated into the Pride volunteer training. There will be a special focus on educating people about transgender sensitivity in this training and how to use more gender-neutral language to address customers and participants of the Festival.

Second, TC Pride is planning on having less of a police presence this year at the Festival and have more unarmed security guards and other ways to provide security. TC Pride intends to keep safety a priority and be able to respond quickly to emergency situations without having as many actual police officers present and/or visible.

To help address the misgendering of transgender people, TC Pride will be creating pronoun stickers for people to wear: she/her, he/him, they/them or choose a blank one and write in your own pronoun. TC Pride has purchased a large 30 x 50 foot transgender flag to be in the color guard of the Ashley Rukes GLBT Pride Parade and has partnered with Bisexual Organizing Project to also purchase a large bisexual flag to be in the parade this year as well!

And to help address the issues that people with sensory issues face at the festival, TC Pride is partnering with the Autism Society of Minnesota to create a unique tent space where people with autism, sensory processing issues, and/or other disabilities that cause sensory overload issues can go to calm down, cool off, and relax. The Autism Society will be helping to create this quiet space and stock it with things that are soothing for people with autism or sensory processing challenges — things such as fidgets, small trampolines, fans, bottles of water, and more. This tent will be staffed with volunteers from the Autism Society throughout the Festival and will be located close to the gardens. TC Pride will also have a limited number of wheelchairs available for use during the Festival this year.

All in all, Twin Cities Pride is very thankful to everyone who participated in the December listening sessions and shared their experiences with our staff and board of directors. Some of the conversations were difficult to have and emotions ran high, but we appreciate that people were willing to speak their minds and be heard. We hope that the changes and additions we are making to Pride this year will be a step in the right direction and we look forward to more progress on these issues as we continue to improve each year. ■



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OUR PRIDE

By Amy Brockman

PRIDE ARTS EVENTS

This year at Pride, there are new arts partnerships that offer new opportunities.



A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD

Photo by Dan Norman

PRIDE FAMILY EVENT: A YEAR WITH FROG AND TOAD

Children's Theater Company's LGBT+CTC and Twin Cities Pride present a performance of *A Year with Frog and Toad* that will feature food, activities, and more for LGBT+ families!

A Year with Frog and Toad is a show that is appropriate for all ages of children and adults alike! This production is based on Arnold Lobel's Newbery and Caldecott Honor Books with music by Robert Reale, lyrics and book by Willie Reale, and choreography by Daniel Pelzig. Original direction by David Petrarca and directed by Peter Rothstein. Arnold Lobel came out to his family as gay four years after his first *Frog and Toad* book was published and it is believed that writing these books was part of his coming out process.

Waking from hibernation in the spring, the perky Frog and the worrywart Toad plant gardens, swim, rake leaves, go sledding, and learn life lessons through four fun-filled seasons. The amphibian odd couple celebrate and rejoice in their differences that make them the best-est of friends while joined by a colorful cast of birds, mice, turtles, and that slo-o-ow snail with the mail. Nominated for three Tony Awards including Best Musical, this unforgettable and tuneful musical is back on the CTC stage after almost a decade! Don't miss this exuberant story based on the treasured books by Arnold Lobel in a musical that soars like a kite and blossoms like spring.

Tickets for this event are limited and priced at $15 per person, which include pizza and activities. Reserve tickets by June 10. Don't delay, buy today for best seating!

The evening begins at 5:30 p.m. with pizza provided by Pizza Lucé along with family activities before the show. The performance of *A Year with Frog and Toad* begins at 7:00 p.m. followed by a post-show talkback with cast members from the show.

LGBT+CTC creates an inclusive, safe space by supporting awareness and visibility of the LGBT+ community at CTC while connecting LGBT+ families, youth organizations, school GSAs, and Employee Resource Groups to CTC programs. This event is sponsored by U.S. Bank and Land O'Lakes.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

DETAILS:
Wednesday, June 14
Children's Theatre Company
2400 3rd Ave. S, Minneapolis
5:30 p.m. Pizza party and family fun
7:00 p.m. Performance begins
Post-show talkback with cast
Tickets only $15
Purchase tickets at bit.ly/PrideFamilyFT or by calling the Children's Theatre Company ticket office at 612-874-0400 and use the promo code Families.
Learn more about the show at bit.ly/Frog-ToadCTC.

PIRATES OF PENZANCE BY ONE VOICE MIXED CHORUS

During Pride weekend 2017, join One Voice Mixed Chorus for a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* that's unlike



THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

Photo courtesy of One Voice Mixed Chorus


SHOW OFF YOUR SHINE
Your confidence shines through. But smoking cigarettes can dull your look by staining your teeth and causing early wrinkles. Show off your shine by living **free from tobacco.**
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anything the Twin Cities has ever experienced! Performed outdoors on Raspberry Island in downtown St. Paul, One Voice's *Pirates* is a topsy-turvy, gender-bending musical adventure for the whole family, featuring a lesbian pirate king and her swarthy crew of sailors arriving by speedboat on the Mississippi, an uproarious appearance from the Major General's "daughters," and so much more!

Featured leads include One Voice singers Anita McColley as Pirate King and Joselyn Fear as Major-General Stanley along with Twin Cities' tenors Brock Metzger (Fredric) and Samuel Baker (Mabel). Ben Krywosz, artistic director for Nautilus Theater, serves as artistic consultant, Gary Briggle is stage director, with musical direction by Jane Ramseyer Miller.

Come dressed in your best *Pirates* costume to enjoy dancing and frivolity including a live band, new orchestration, and sing-along opportunities for the audience. Food trucks will be available, or bring your own picnic along with a blanket or lawn chair. One Voice's production of this comic opera is sure to be a fun, free way to spend an afternoon on the Mississippi River!

By RSVPing to this event at onevoicemn.org, you will be able to gain access to the island one hour before the show starts (30 minutes before the general public, letting you get first pick for a spot to sit!).

VIP Level One tickets ($25) will guarantee you a seat (so you don't need to bring your own) in the Police and Hapless Maidens Tent and a bottle of water.

VIP Level Two tickets ($50) will guarantee you a seat (so you don't need to bring your own) in the Pirate Kings Tent, including adult beverages and a voucher for food at one of the food trucks.

Parking will be available on Harriet Island, in parking ramps off of East Fillmore Avenue, and in downtown St. Paul near the Wabasha Street Bridge in the Victory Ramp and Intercontinental Ramp. In case of severe bad weather, the show will be moved inside to Central Presbyterian Church in downtown St. Paul.

Support for this project provided through the 2016 Knight Arts Challenge, St. Paul Cultural STAR Program, Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, and individual gifts to One Voice Mixed Chorus.

One Voice Mixed Chorus is Minnesota's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight allies (LGBTA) chorus. For 30 years One Voice has been "building community and creating social change by raising our voices in song." Known for their musical excellence, diverse programming, innovative collaborations, and deep commitment to community outreach, One Voice is the largest LGBTA chorus in North America with 125 singing members ranging from ages 16 to 79, and nearly 50 non-singing "Fifth Section" volunteers. Under the direction of artistic director Jane Ramseyer Miller, the award-winning chorus inspires transformation through passionate, vibrant, and creative performances at concerts, during outreach tours and through its pioneering OUT in Our Schools program, now in its 18th year.

To learn more about One Voice Mixed Chorus, call 651-298-1954 or visit www.onevoicemn.org.

DETAILS:
Thursday, June 22 at 7:30 p.m. (Preview)
Saturday, June 24 at 3:30 p.m.
Sunday, June 25 at 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.
Raspberry Island
2 Wabasha St. S, St. Paul
Performances are FREE, but ticket reservations are encouraged at www.onevoicemn.org.
VIP tickets start at $25

THIRD THURSDAY: PRIDE AT MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART

Get ready for Twin Cities Pride at Mia! Get a taste for what the Pride festival and parade will be like this year, with some cameo appearances straight from Pride. Dance to live music from Nick Jordan and Lady Lark. Preview the TPT documentary *Out North*, which chronicles the history of LGBTQ communities in Minnesota, and meet the film's director. The Pride parade will have the rainbow LGBT pride flag, the leather pride flag, and — new this year — a bisexual pride flag and transgender pride flag! Make your own pride flag for the parade, and get to know the art of drag through pop-up performances curated by Flip Phone. Last but not least, pose for equality in the Pride-themed photo booth! This event is presented in partnership with Twin Cities Pride.

On the third Thursday of every month, join Mia to experience Mia's diverse art collection through unique programs, drinks, and live music. Sign up for e-mail updates to receive tailored monthly updates about all of your Mia interests, including Third Thursday, at new.artsmia.org.

Event Host: Ameriprise Financial
Music Partner: The Current

DETAILS:
Thursday, June 15
6–9 p.m.
Minneapolis Institute of Art
2400 3rd Ave. S, Minneapolis
Free event, refreshments available for sale. ■



PRIDE AT MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART

Photo courtesy of Minneapolis Institute of Art

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The Trevor Project provides life-saving crisis intervention for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth.

FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT **macys.com/celebrate**

macy's

Events subject to change or cancellation.

LEATHER LIFE

• By Steve Lenius

MORE PRIDE, LESS FEAR

For both the GLBT and the leather/BDSM/fetish communities, Pride season again is here. But what a difference between this year and last. Last year I used "Plenty To Be Proud Of" as the headline of my Pride column. And I remember that the celebration last year seemed jubilant.

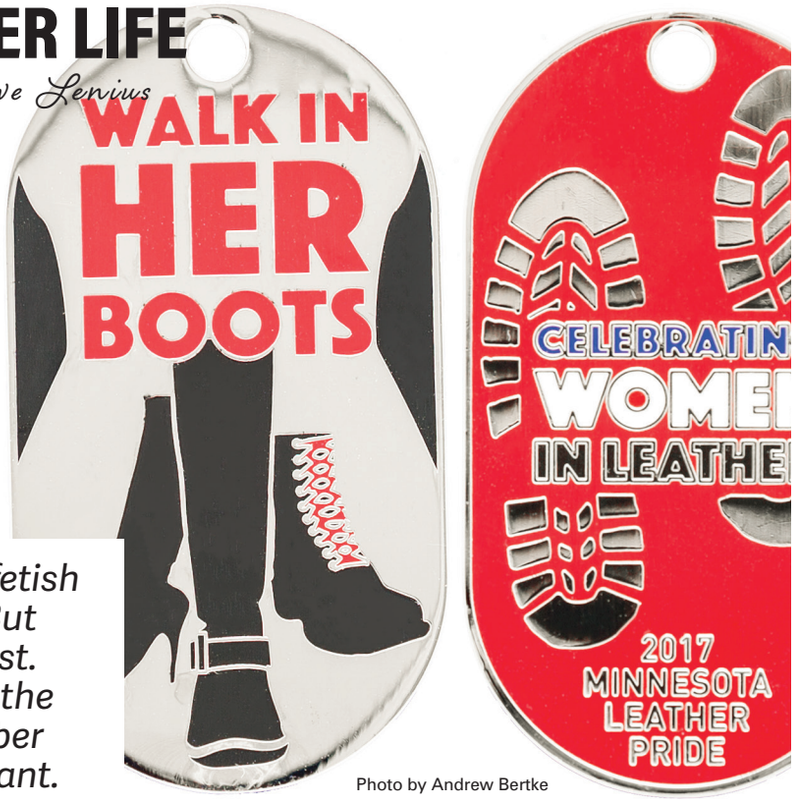


Photo by Andrew Bertke

This year, with the political landscape so shifted by last November's election, many of this year's Pride celebrations are expected to include some #Resist elements.

In the current political landscape, many members of the GLBT and leather/BDSM/fetish communities fear gains made in recent years will be rolled back. But, by the same token, many people in other communities fear us, the members of the GLBT and/or leather/BDSM/fetish communities, and that fear prompts their discrimination against us.

With the United States of America currently divided into two factions, and each faction acting like it's scared of the other faction — well, no good has come, or will come, of this situation.

So let's not give in to the urge to use our Pride celebrations, here and elsewhere, as ammunition in this fear fight. Instead, let's make our Pride celebrations declarations of pride in ourselves, in others, and in our communities. The best statements of pride are first-person: "I'm proud of myself for living authentically"; "I'm proud of you, members of my family, for accepting and supporting me"; or "I'm proud of my community and what we have accomplished."

Our own pride does not have to come at the expense of someone else. Pride is about equality, not superiority. We're not celebrating GLBT Supremacy or Kink Supremacy. Misusing our pride to denigrate someone else, or their community, is no more effective than apologizing to someone by saying, "I'm sorry you're such an idiot." It might feel good at the time, but it won't be productive in the long run.

So, as we march and as we celebrate, let's keep in mind that Pride is not our excuse to disrespect others, even if they have first disrespected us or other members of our community. Pride is not about them; it's about us.

Minnesota Leather Pride 2017: "Walk in Her Boots: Celebrating Women in Leather"

The theme of the 2017 Minnesota Leather Pride celebration is "Walk in Her Boots: Celebrating Women in Leather." Andrew Bertke, of Everett Allen Photography, is again the designer of this year's dog tag. Get your dog tag, while supplies last, at any Minnesota Leather Pride event or at the Minnesota Leather Pride booth at the Twin Cities Festival of Pride in Loring Park (Saturday and Sunday, June 24 and 25).

Minnesota Leather Pride Events for 2017

Minnesota Leather Pride's recent shift toward having leather pride events throughout the year means that there are fewer events scheduled to coincide with the Twin Cities Pride Festival. Here are the Minnesota Leather Pride events on the schedule at the time of this writing; see Minnesota Leather Pride's Facebook page or MNLeatherPride.org for the most up-to-date information on these events and any others that might be scheduled.

Tuesday, June 13: Twin Cities girls of Leather social at Twin Cities Leather & Latte, 6–9 p.m. Come hang out with the girls and find out more about their organization. Open to everyone regardless of gender, orientation, or which side of the whip you fall on.

Friday, June 16: Floggapalooza at The Saloon, 8 p.m. Presented by Knights of Leather. No admission charge. Come and see demonstrations for the community of flogging techniques from a variety of delightful implements on a variety of delightful demo bottoms eager to share a practice they enjoy.

Thursday, June 22: Atons' Pride Smoker on the patio at eagleBOLTbar, 7–10 p.m. No admission charge. Atons of Minneapolis members will serve you a cigar and a shot for $10. Whether you enjoy a fine cigar or not, this is always a fun social event.

Saturday, June 24 and Sunday, June 25: Stop by the Minnesota Leather Pride booth at the Twin Cities Pride Festival. An information table at the booth will be staffed by Minnesota Leather Pride's sponsor groups. Everyone is welcome, whether you are just curious about leather or have years of experience under your belt. Get your 2017 "Walk in Her Boots" collectible dog tag if you don't already have one. Loring Park, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Sunday, June 25: March with the kink and leather community in the Ashley Rukes GLBT Pride Parade and help carry Minnesota's giant leather pride flag. Meet at the corner of 3rd St. S and Hennepin Ave. by 10:40 a.m.; parade begins at 11 a.m. The giant flags are among the units leading the parade. After marching, stick around for a group photo on the hill near the corner of Yale and Willow, at the edge of Loring Park, facing the Whitney Fine Arts building. ■

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BARS

By Terrance Griep





Photos by Sophia Hantzes



RUBY JUBILEE: THE SALOON REACHES ITS 40TH BIRTHDAY

Everyone knows that your 50th anniversary is golden, and your 25th anniversary is silver…but what substance has been assigned to the 40th anniversary? Why, the same substance that enwrapped Judy Garland's tootsies while she indulged in technicolor adventures: ruby. Which seems oh-so-appropriate when considering the 40th anniversary of a downtown Minneapolis staple: the Saloon.

The Saloon began life as a Western-themed gay bar that included a leather room whose private entrance was called the Rear Entry. (Hey, it was the '70s; please don't shoot the messenger.) "While it was very popular among the gay community, it suffered from poor-to-inept management during its first months," remembers Jim "Andy" Anderson, current co-owner of the Saloon. "It was renamed 'The Y'All Come Back Saloon' after the community and staff boycotted the bar for its poor management policies."

The name wasn't just a plaintive cry for customers and workers to return. According to Anderson, "'The Y'All Come Back Saloon' was a popular song by the Oak Ridge Boys at the time and seemed to be appropriate to accent the changes that were made." Hopefully, Minneapolis will never forget how close it came to being permanently blighted by the "Elvira Giddy Up Oom Poppa Omm Poppa Mow Mow Bar."

"I started working there as part of a deal to iron out the problems," Anderson says. "I had been working in Miami, Florida, at a gay club there and was asked to return to Minneapolis by my old friend and former University of Minnesota student roommate [and current co-owner], John Moore."

This wasn't a simple business proposal, it was very nearly an abduction. "John came down to Miami and convinced me to return to Minneapolis," recounts Anderson. "The two of us drove back to Minnesota to negotiate new policies with the owner at the time. He was very open to our suggestions because he wanted the boycott ended."

Radical surgery was required: the boycott-inspiring manager was sent packing, and new business practices were implemented. Anderson and Moore set out to buy the future Saloon themselves, but it wasn't going to be easy. "It was a long and difficult procedure," Anderson laments. But persistence paid off. "The mayor of Minneapolis, Don Fraser, signed the license transfer on Dec. 21, 1981," Anderson says. "I recall thinking at the time that we could consider ourselves successful if we could keep it open for five years!"

The first point of order was to give staff and customers a reason to come back, y'all. Anderson narrates, "The early years were very exciting and we brought in many entertainers including Gloria Gaynor, The Weather Girls, and many more." These acts restored customers, again and again, until they considered the Saloon their home away from home.

As promising as the Saloon's prospects seemed in the early years, a horrific darkness loomed in the immediate future like a plague of locusts. "Things changed dramatically in 1983 as the first AIDS cases were reported," Anderson recollects. "Thus began two decades of enormous struggles to keep people as customers and do our best to educate and help our community."

Community education may have started as community service but soon transmuted into community survival. Says Anderson, "Most gay people were in the closet then and the bars were the best places to educate people with the risks associated with unsafe sex."

But just because the Saloon's clientele was facing an existential threat was no reason to lose its sense of humor. Anderson contributed to the creation of a super hero sworn to battle this particular evil. "Thus Captain Condom was born," Anderson says. "Pete Glaser, our coat check person, assumed the role of our point person in this effort." But please don't forget, that's supposed to be a *secret* identity.

The Saloon's history had become synonymous with Minneapolis's GLBT history. "During this time, we helped sponsor the first gay softball team and played the Minneapolis police team as a community outreach with the help of then police captain Tony Bouza," Anderson smiles. "We played two years at Parade Stadium and won both games! This was big news back then and was reported in the newspapers and on TV, shortly after the Goodtime Softball League was formed with the Saloon sponsoring many teams, something we still do today."

The history of Twin Cities Pride is the history of the Saloon, as well, more or less. "The first Pride Parade was a very small event of probably less than 50 people who courageously marched down Hennepin Avenue," Anderson says. "The Saloon received permission from the city to do a block party on Hennepin in front of the Saloon and that was the beginnings of our Pride celebrations."

Those celebrations will continue this year and every year, of course. Gushes Andy Anderson: "We have been blessed with an incredible number of dedicated and skilled employees from DJs to bartenders to barbacks to security staff, and many more over the years, and they are most certainly responsible for our 40 years of success!"

Or, as many of the Saloon's regular customers might put it, "There's no place like home!" ■

BARS

By George Holdgrafer



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

19 BAR

CELEBRATES TRIPLE ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

Photo courtesy of 19 Bar

February 6 was the 65th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the British throne in 1952; she's now the longest-reigning British monarch in history. As well, for the 19 Bar in Minneapolis (with an iconic 1960s portrait of the queen that has graced its north wall for decades), it's a triple anniversary this year: the 65th of the venerable landmark, the entire history of which coincides with the Queen's reign; the 25th of Gary Hallberg's owning the business; and the 95th of the building that houses the establishment.

The cornerstone of the historic 19 Bar building (whose present name derives from its address, 19 W 15th St., Minneapolis) bears this three-line inscription: "Magney & Tussler, Inc./Architects & Engineers/1922." The firm's main claim to fame is that it was the architect of the Foshay Tower in downtown Minneapolis, which debuted in 1929 and was the tallest building in the city until the IDS Tower surpassed it in 1972. During the Prohibition Era in the United States, the building later called the 19 reportedly was a speakeasy that served illegal alcoholic beverages, a precursor of its later countercultural incarnation.

In 1952, life partners Everett Stoltz and George Koch opened a predominately gay bar in the premises, a shrewd move given its location in the heart of what has been a gay enclave for decades. From the 1950s on, the 19's clientele mainly was gay men from the nearby Loring Park neighborhood of Minneapolis. In the early days, the entrance was in the middle of the north wall on West 15th Street, and the bar was on the west wall. On shelves behind the bar, each regular patron had a barrel-shaped brown glass mug with his or her name inscribed on the wooden handle.

For several decades, the usually quiet 19 suddenly would transform into a beehive of people late Sunday night, when an old Minneapolis "blue law" (repealed in 1990) allowed the bar, which had only a 3.2 ("weak") beer license, to stay open until 1 a.m., while the other gay clubs in the city with full beer and liquor licenses had to close at midnight. An exodus of people eager to enjoy an extra hour of imbibing and socializing culminated in a long line of people stretching outside the 19 that filled the bar to capacity every Sunday.

In 1983, after several ownership changes at the 19 over the years, Ray Onstine bought the business. Completely remodeling it, he moved the bar to the center of the building and relocated the entrance to the east corner of the north wall. After his death in 1990, his straight parents, Bud and Charlotte Onstine, operated the bar for several years.

Gay businessman Hallberg purchased the 19 on May 8, 1992, and he bought the building as well in 1995. In several stages, he nearly doubled the bar's space by expanding west into what had been the adjacent Loring Cleaners. He also built a now-popular year-round patio extending from the south wall in the back. In 2003, he obtained a license from the city to serve full liquor and strong beer, which brought a host of new customers who wanted more than 3.2 beer.

Today, the 19 continues the friendly ambiance of its 65 years as a neighborhood GLBT bar. Everyone across the spectrum of the community, from regulars to patrons new to the establishment, will feel welcome in this no-attitude gathering place. Most times, you'll find some people engaging in a game of pool at its three state-of-the-art tables. Others simply will carry on a conversation over a reasonably priced cocktail or beer.

As the community bar closest to the Pride Festival in nearby Loring Park, the 19 is always the busiest place in the Twin Cities during Pride Weekend. Lines form outside the bar from the time it opens, reminiscent of the late Sunday nights of yesteryear. Inside and outside the bar, all enjoy the camaraderie of once again joining in celebrating our Pride.

Hallberg sums it all up this way: "We're very proud to be the GLBT bar in the Twin Cities that has been serving the community the longest — and one of the oldest, if not the oldest, in the country. I'm also proud of having owned the bar for a third of its history now. We thank our countless past and present patrons for supporting us all these years. And the 19 will be here for our community many years in the future."

So, let's all stop in at the 19 during Pride and wish this friendly GLBT mainstay another 65 years! ■

19 BAR
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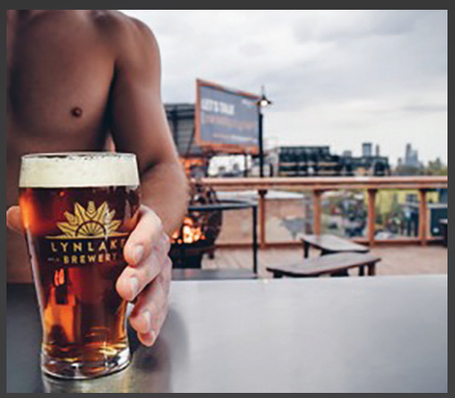


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EAT THE MENU

By Bradley Traynor







(From left) Cocktails, the bar at Mercy, Chef Mike Rakun, and the private dining area with cozy accents. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

MERCY

Wait, did Marin close? That's the restaurant downtown inside the Chambers Hotel, right? Isn't something else there now? Oh, you're going to Mercy for dinner tonight? Where is that again?"

It can be hard to keep up in our frenetic, ever-evolving dining landscape. Restaurants come and restaurants go. Some eateries evaporate into the ether unawares. Others transmogrify into something magical, and more elevated than their origins.

Such is the case with Mercy, formerly Marin. Same talented executive chef. Completely different expression of his heart and soul. Executive chef Mike Rakun and his business partner-wife Abby Rakun are telling a story with Mercy. A delicious, inviting story.

Mercy peels back the layers of Marin's once classic, upscale fine dining ambience to reveal a warmer, more relaxed, hygge-infused casualness perfect for an increasingly neighborhood-ish stretch of downtown.

One rainy afternoon a few weeks back, friends and I fell into a comfy large booth in the bar. Aiming to fortify ourselves against the dreary rain-soaked cityscape, we ordered drinks and began a tasting trip across the menu.

The offerings are at once familiar, yet full of playful takes on classic dishes. The pacu fish ribs, for example, an appetizer for the adventurous, takes a fish you've probably never tried and slathers it in a classic buffalo dressing. They are meaty and crisp, earthy and substantial.

Seafood shines at Mercy. Where other pasture-roaming proteins often reign supreme, chef Mike unabashedly offers up a coastal bounty of *fruits de mer*. Both literally and figuratively.

We traversed a tantalizing topography of tasty sea treats throughout our meal, from scallops to shrimp to oysters and lobster.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 54

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EAT THE MENU





(From Left) Oysters and shrimp; Paku fish ribs (the menu says "Don't be scared"); and roasted lobster on spring peas with shiitaki and chili oil. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

Let's talk about the lobster. Roasted to perfection and nestled atop farm-fresh spring peas, the sweet, succulent meat stands alone in flavor. The fact that it's drizzled with a dazzling chili oil only adds to its appeal.

The scallops were another big hit. Buttery sweet and seared to perfection, the ample portions are laid atop fresh spinach, dressed in a warm bacon vinaigrette. The success of this dish lies in the surprise addition of croutons made from pillows of fried grits. Crispy croutons that magically melt in your mouth? Yep, you want these.

Sides at Mercy are comfy and satisfying. Take, for example, the garlic bread. No, literally. Take the garlic bread. Take all of the garlic bread and hoard it. Think homemade cinnamon rolls, but with garlic. And lots and lots of butter. It melts in your mouth and might lead to table fights if you don't just go ahead and get two orders already.

Another entrée worthy of mention is the duck breast. Chiefly because

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56



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EAT THE MENU



(Captions) Clockwise from top: duck breast with duck pot stickers, green beans, and ginger-orange sauce; scallops with spinach, grits crouton, and warm bacon vinaigrette; the triple chocolate sundae; and key lime pie. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

I generally avoid ordering duck breast. It is oft over-cooked and woefully under-seasoned. Not only does chef Mike know how to sear the perfect piece of duck, he one-ups every other duck dish I've ever had with the addition of handmade duck-stuffed pot stickers. Trust me. A plate of these poultry pillows on a rainy day will cure appetites and broken hearts.

By the time desserts arrived, we began to wonder if our eyes had been bigger than our stomachs. Who am I kidding? We were full, but heck. When did full ever get in the way of dessert?

We opted for the triple chocolate sundae. Three scoops of ice cream, each a different member on the chocolate family tree, are drizzled with more chocolate, then dotted with bite-size chunks of chewy chocolate brownies.

The key lime pie is deconstructed, but every bit as rich and rewarding as its namesake and classic, sliced cousin.

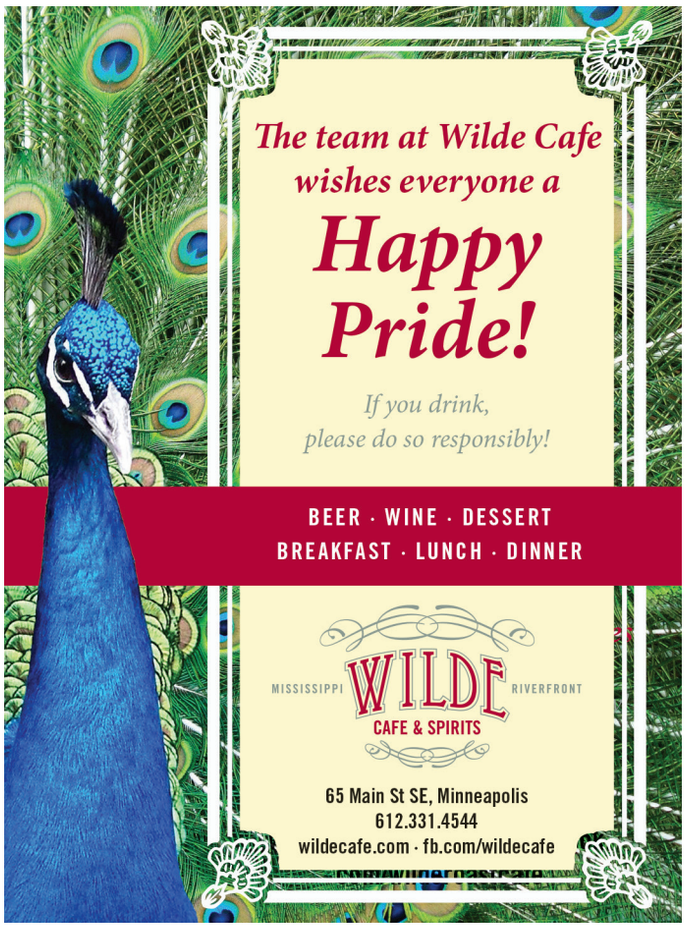
A couple mugs of decaf later and our appetites were not only sated, they longed to know when a second trip was in the cards. That's no small feat. Maybe next should be the brunch.

Mercy is a welcome addition to downtown. Casual, but not just for casual's sake. It's a welcome respite from the frantic pace of a bustling metropolis just outside its doors. It's a satisfying meal, familiar with a hint of adventure. Perfectly suited for a city with similar attributes.

And did I mention there's a burger on the menu? ■

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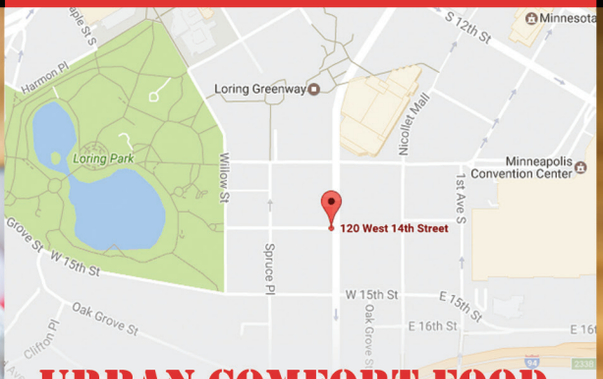
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Photo by Asha Belk

A DAY in the Life

BY ANDY LIEN

JOHN SUGIMURA

Age:
Older…but young enough not to be bitter.

Where did you grow up?
I grew up in the north metro and migrated to the city of Minneapolis early on in my life.

Where do you live?
I live downtown and thoroughly enjoy high-rise living, especially when it is snowing and freezing out and I don't have to shovel or scrape off my car.

Who do you live with?
I live with my SO of nearly 22 years and our dog Rudy.

What is your occupation?
Currently, I am the executive chef, concept-brand director, and partner for the fine-casual restaurant brand PinKU Japanese Street Food.

When did you come out?
I have never been in, unless other people weren't ready.

How'd that go?
Personally, my memories are positive. I had parents that loved me and wanted me to be me. Everyday I received thoughtful messages that I am okay just the way I am.

When do you wake up?
My sleeping schedule is driven by morning restaurant shopping starting at 7:00.

Phone alarm or old school alarm?
My phone alarm wakes me 50 percent of the time and the other 50 percent of the time is my hungry four-legged BFF Rudy.

What's the first thing you do in the morning?
Turn on the hot water for tea and feed Rudy.

Breakfast?
My SO will prepare breakfast for me including a bagel with half-cream cheese/half-peanut butter with sliced bananas…I share with Rudy.

Coffee?
I've never been a coffee drinker. My morning drink is Earl Grey Tea.

Cream or no?
No.

How do you spend your commute:
During my six-minute commute, I typically consume Red Bull.

If your job were like a yearbook, what would you be voted?
I think I would be voted most creative.

What inspires you?
Happy people who make me laugh inspire me…a lot! At this point in my life the one thing I can offer is kindness without expecting anything in return. When I reflect each day and when I feel I have given more than taken, I call it a good day, and feel inspired to do it all over again tomorrow.

Do you eat your lunch while working or take a break?
I like to take a lunch break to recharge.

Is your work space tidy or a hot mess?
Tidy – 'nuff said!

What's been your favorite job?
Obviously opening PinKU Japanese Street Food and getting to know my customers who have been so complimentary of our restaurant, food, and hospitality. Their authentic generosity has blown me away. People and service is my passions.
For many years I enjoyed public service for the City of Minneapolis Mayor's Office, PICA Head Start, and Autism Works. Every day I worked aggressively to improve the lives of children and their families.

Who are your heroes?
Alyce Dillon, the executive director for PICA Head Start since 1969, is my hero. She has been making a difference in the lives of the poorest families in our community for decades…very inspirational. I adore her! People who are battling/winning/loosing chronic diseases are my hero. I hate fucking cancer!

Favorite weeknight meal: Go out, take out, or cook in?
Eat in and enjoy Aglio Et Olio (traditional Italian pasta dish coming from Naples) made with capelli d'angelo pasta, roasted tomatoes, garlic, basil, and really expensive Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.

Most embarrassing moment:
My second grade teacher hung a sign around my neck that read "I Talk Too Much" and made me walk the school halls and successfully humiliated me.

On a usual weeknight, you are doing what?
Working at the restaurant, designing the next restaurant location, creating new menu items for our fabulous guests, walking Rudy and, on occasion, I have been known to sneak off to a movie to get in a treat and down time.

Bedtime:
After 9:00 p.m. and before 3:00 a.m.

Favorite weekend activity:
I love afternoon movies.

Words of wisdom to share:
"I've learned that people will forgot what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forgot how you made them feel." –Maya Angelou







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ADVENTURE

• Story and photos by Todd Pernsteiner



TODD Goes to Hollywood: How One Twin Cities Man is Pursuing His Dreams in La La Land

Have you wanted to try something new but didn't know if you could muster up the courage? Do you contemplate "what if" or "if only"? Now may be the time to go for it and see what you can do.

Ever since I was a kid, I've continually challenged myself to step outside of my comfort zone. For more than five years I had been contemplating the next big thing I would like to do in my life. I have experienced many highs and lows; the lows, losing people close to me, have made me realize how delicate and short life really is. I constantly remind myself: "Todd, you only get one chance at this life, what are you waiting for?"

Since 1999, I have been a self-employed graphic designer. I have found my passion and truly enjoy what I do, and my work allows me to work from home, essentially anywhere in the world. Anyone who knows me knows I love Minneapolis with all my heart, but I have never lived outside of the Midwest and have felt a calling to try something new.

In the past three years I traveled all over the country exploring places I might like to live, even if just for a brief period of time. I visited New York, Denver, Washington D.C., Orlando, Austin, Seattle — all beautiful places, but one spot seemed to have the most appeal to me, Los Angeles. An interesting choice, I know. It's a city people either love or hate; there seems to be no in-between. To me it has always felt like a good fit.

"Follow your passions, follow your heart, and the things you need will come." —Elizabeth Taylor

Why L.A.? For me the answer goes beyond just the obvious appeal of sunny days and miles of beaches; it's where the magic of Hollywood happens.

My draw to performing goes back to when I was a wee lad. As a child, I loved to write shows and commercials, and I loved to direct and perform. I would cast cousins and neighbors to star in circuses and musicals at my house. In high school, I played in band and acted in a number of productions. During and after college, I took a hiatus from performing to start and grow my design business.

Then, in the early 2000s, after attending a number of Brave New Workshop shows, I got the itch to perform again. I got up the nerve to take an introductory improv class at BNW's school. I instantly fell in love with it. After five levels of classes, I auditioned and was cast in the BNW's school show: *Six Ring Circus*. Years later I joined the *Friday Night Stage Match* troupe. After that show closed, I got onto a team for a show called *Improv Happy Hour* at the Phoenix Theater.

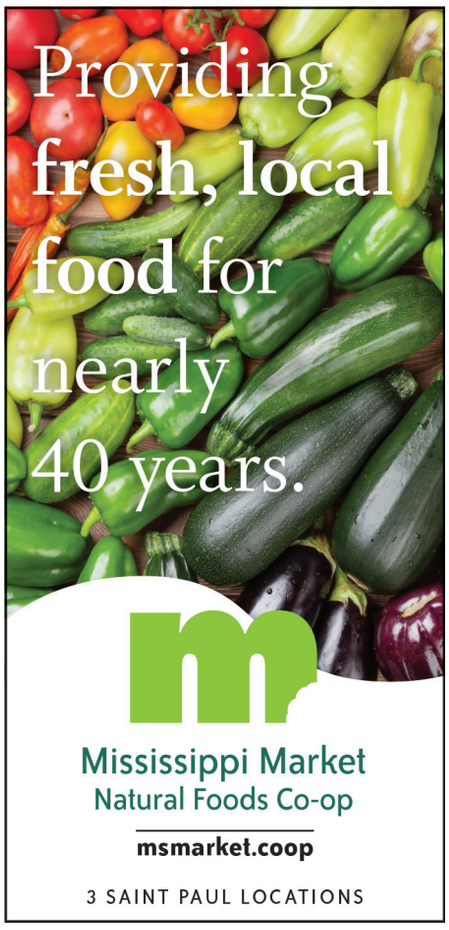
Along with performing, I immersed myself in seeing shows at Brave New Workshop and Huge Theater in Minneapolis, as well as Second City in Chicago and Hollywood, and The Groundlings in L.A. I've always wondered, "What if I tried going to L.A. to pursue opportunities in the entertainment industry?"

Chasing a Dream

On December 26, 2016, I packed up my clothes, my home office, and some other necessities, and made the trek out to sunny California. The plan: sublease a furnished apartment for three months to pursue classes in sitcom writing, acting, and improvisational comedy. Sounds simple, right? Well, it wasn't a quick decision by any stretch of the imagination.

My original goal was to be in California by July 2016, but I always seemed to find ways to delay it. Making huge life decisions isn't always easy. Finally, five months later, I was ready. I signed up for "Writing Your Sitcom Pitch Pack-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64


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et" and "Writing Your Sitcom Spec Script" classes at Second City in Hollywood. After convincing myself that it could be a temporary move, I was excited for my decision. And, who wouldn't want to be in California during a brutal Minnesota winter? Am I right?

My first writing class began at Second City in mid-January and shortly after I also started an acting class that focused specifically on auditioning for TV sitcoms. I dove in head-first. The sitcom writing class was very collaborative. My instructor, a veteran TV writer has sold 25 sitcom pilots, of which two got produced. The 14 other students in the class had so many great ideas and provided constructive criticism throughout the process.

My sitcom acting instructor was critical but experienced, and offered great critiques and feedback. In each class, we would get a script, review it, record it on camera, and get feedback on how we did. The class was a great way to learn and understand the eight sitcom character types.

In February I had new headshots taken and printed and submitted them to L.A. talent agents and casting directors. I also signed up for four casting services from which I get a flood of daily emails with new acting job postings. I sort through hundreds of TV, film, and commercial roles that best fit my age, characteristics, and strengths. Since I don't have an agent yet, I submit for jobs on my own, which can be quite time-consuming. I attend or self-tape around three or four auditions per week. It's actually quite amusing walking into a casting call and seeing 10 to 20 other guys who eerily look a lot like you.

To date, I've landed quite a few auditions and call-backs, and I've gotten a handful of roles: two on crime reenactment shows (as a police officer and a murderer's brother) and one in a short film produced by American Film Institute students (as a Jewish son).

Lately I've been going on a lot of auditions for nerd roles, which I'm hoping is foreshadowing and not typecasting or stereotyping. I like to joke that this may be my way of landing a role on *Big Bang Theory* (*BBT* casting directors: if you're reading this, I'm totally available).

I have made some great connections here in my classes and in the acting gigs I've done. I can't go anywhere in this town without meeting someone who is "in the industry." There's great collaboration here between writers and actors. Many of the people I've talked to have all said the best way to be successful is to create your own content so you get full control of the production and can write yourself into roles you want to play. I am in the process of writing outlines for a couple

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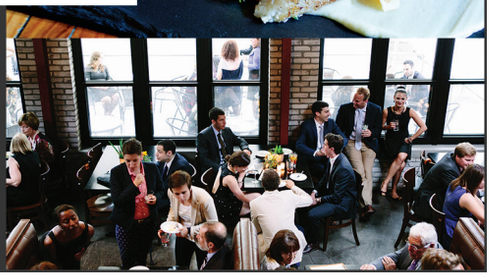


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of sitcom ideas I have, as well as a feature film. I am also looking into stand up comedy classes.

I have to say, this is quite exciting. Three months turned into four, then five, and I'm now on month six of splitting my time between L.A. and Minneapolis. I have also found a good balance with my business. I continue to run it full-time from both L.A. and Minneapolis, and the transition has been exceptionally smooth.

Get Your Game On

Oh, I almost forgot, it wouldn't be Hollywood without game shows, right? As a kid I used to pretend to be sick so I could watch shows like *The Price is Right*, *100,000 Dollar Pyramid*, and *Press Your Luck*. Since I'm in game show central, it seems appropriate for me to try to get on some. I was on *Let's Make a Deal* in April of 2016 (winning a large gas grill), and since have applied or auditioned for *Wheel of Fortune*, *The Wall*, *Hollywood Game Night*, *Pyramid*, and most recently, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* A guy can dream of winning millions, can't he? I would even settle for a BRAND NEW CAR!

A Place Where Anything Can Happen

I love hearing the fairytale Hollywood success stories. They prove that anything can happen, at any time, if you're willing to take risks.

I'm in awe as to how James Michael Tyler landed his supporting role as coffee shop manager Gunther on the show *Friends*. Tyler was a real-life barista at a small Hollywood coffee shop when one of his director friends called him to say, "Hey, do you want to come on and be in the background in a coffee shop? I would love you to just stand by the espresso machine and pretend like you're actually really working it, just so it would look authentic." Eventually the show's co-creator, Marta Kauffman, approached Tyler to say she created a character around him and that's how he landed a key role on the show for 10 seasons.

Even the A-list celebrities all had to start somewhere, from small guest roles and failed TV pilots, to zapping zits in Clearasil commercials. Kerry Washington got her Screen Actors Guild (SAG) card after appearing in an *ABC Afterschool Special*. Chris Pratt was 19 years old and living in a van in Maui, Hawaii, and waiting tables at Bubba Gump Shrimp Company when actress Rae Dawn Cong came to the restaurant to eat. She ended up casting Pratt in a never-released horror comedy she was directing and from there he landed a role on the teen drama *Everwood*.

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Seeing Stars

My friends in L.A. give me a hard time for getting giddy whenever I spot a celebrity, but I'm not ashamed to admit it's still a thrill for me. I was recently driving down Hollywood Boulevard next to talk show host Jimmy Kimmel in his convertible VW Thing. It was just hours after he taped his show where he talked about his newborn son's heart defect and the importance of health care.

Another time I was walking with a friend and his dog when Wilson Cruz came up to pet the pooch and chat us up. Cruz is best known for his role as Rickie Vasquez on *My So-Called Life*. Admittedly, I didn't know who he was but my friend told me after the fact.

Once, when on a tour of Paramount Studios, I told Lily Tomlin that I loved her (as one would do, right?). We were exiting the sound stage where her show *Grace & Frankie* is filmed as she pulled up in a golf cart. She was very sweet and said she loved me back (and I really think she meant it).

I went to an amateur comedy night at a bar in March and the host announced they had a special guest comedian, none other than Ms. Wanda Sykes. She was great and I got to meet her. I've also seen a variety of stars out and about at various L.A. hangouts: the handsome Mark Valley (*The Millionaires* and *Boston Legal*), fellow nerdy-looking actor, James Bucatinsky (*Scandal*), Jai Rodriguez (*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*), and popular club DJ, Cazwell.

My first star-sighting will be forever ingrained in my mind as it was a doozy. I pulled up to a stoplight in West Hollywood and looked to the right only to spot adult film star, Ron Jeremy. Let me tell you, there's no mistaking the five-foot-six man even though I've never seen one of his movies (honest!). (Writer's note: if you don't know who he is, DO NOT look him up — and if you do, don't say I didn't warn you.)

Being Alone is One Way to Find Yourself

Being an adult in a new place isn't always easy; it's hard to make new friends in your 40s. I miss my Twin Cities friends and family terribly but they've been very supportive during this new endeavor and thankfully I get to see them often. Plus, thanks to the magic of Facebook and texting I have been able to stay connected more now than I would've ever before.

I am alone a lot, working and writing and studying scripts, but oddly I am not lonely. Interestingly enough, I have found my independence here. I came to L.A. to push myself and discover what I can do, and so far I haven't been disappointed. I can't wait to write the script for the next chapter in my life.























CONTINUED ON PAGE 70







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A MIDWESTERNER'S GUIDE TO VISITING L.A.







Looking to visit Los Angeles? Here are some suggestions of how to make your trip complete.

TAKE A HIKE:

Hit one of the area's many hiking trails. Probably the most popular path is at Runyon Canyon, a 130-acre park two blocks from Hollywood Boulevard. The site offers amazing views of the Hollywood sign, downtown L.A., and, on a clear day, the ocean. If you were a fan of the show *M*A*S*H*, head to Malibu Creek State Park where you can see where episodes were filmed, complete with some leftover prop vehicles and the famous wooden directional sign.

DINE & DRINK:

If you're a fan of reality TV, Lisa Vanderpump's PUMP and SUR restaurants should be on your list. You might bump into big-name celebrities at both, but you're guaranteed to see the realty stars of *Vanderpump Rules* at SUR. Another place where you should try to get reservations is CATCH in West Hollywood. The stars flock to this new L.A. hot spot to be seen. On any given night you'll find a gaggle of paparazzi perched outside waiting to capture the next high-profile diner. For amazing night time views of the Hollywood Hills (aka homes none of us could ever afford), head to the rooftop bars at EP/LP or the The Roof on Wilshire.

ROAD TRIP:

Don't be afraid of traffic and driving in L.A. There are a lot of ways to avoid the freeways. If you want to explore the coast and wine country, head up the Pacific Coast Highway through Malibu where you can watch surfers catching waves; you may even spot a celebrity surfing or shopping at one of the town's little corner stores. I spotted Hillary Swank and her pooch outside a store at a Malibu strip mall. Then travel further north to the central coast wine country to do wine tastings in beautiful Santa Barbara and the charming Danish village of Solvang, complete with windmills and eclectic little shops.

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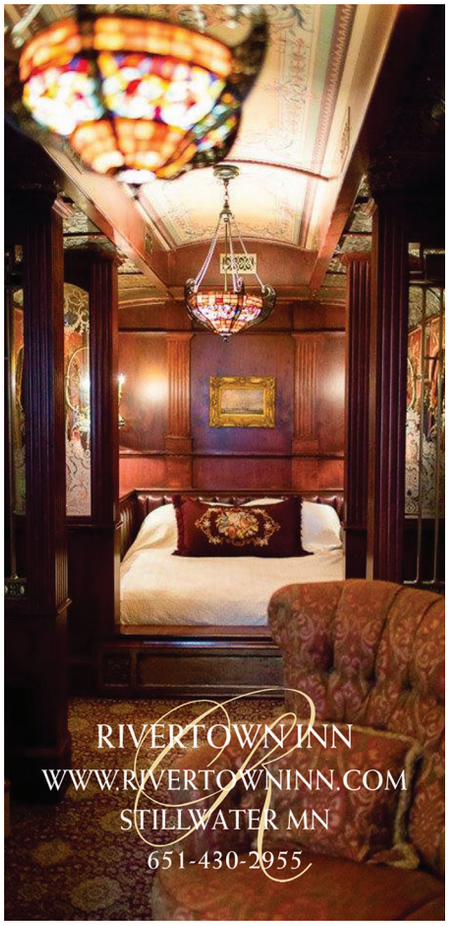
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HIT THE BEACH:

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TAKE IN EVENTS:

If you can make it happen, I highly recommend taking in the Rose Bowl Parade on New Years Day. It's great to see on TV and even more amazing to see in person; I had goosebumps. All summer and fall there's always a show at the Hollywood Bowl. Lastly, Google "Hollywood movie premiers" and you may be able to catch the stars arriving for the next big blockbuster on Hollywood Boulevard.

STAY:

L..A hotels can be pretty pricey; in West Hollywood, Hollywood, or downtown L.A., plan to spend at least $400 per night on a room. The alternative is to find a nice Airbnb or VRBO space. If you're looking for a fun nightlife scene, settle into West Hollywood. There's a bar along Santa Monica Boulevard for everyone's taste. What's nice about West Hollywood is it's very walkable or a cheap Uber ride to great bars and restaurants on both Santa Monica and Sunset Boulevards. Or, if you're more inclined to stay by the beach, check out Santa Monica or Venice, both have their own appeal.

PLAY PAPARAZZI:

You're likely to spot celebs literally anywhere in L.A.. I've run into them at the airport, at movie studios, walking down the sidewalk, driving next to me, and at comedy clubs. You just have to keep your eyes peeled because you never know where they might pop up.

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Todd Pernsteiner grew up in north-central Wisconsin and after living the past 19 years in the Twin Cities, now splits his time between Los Angeles and Minneapolis. You can follow Todd's adventures on Instagram: @toddpern or at www.mostlyfunnytodd.com.











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By Mike Marcotte

ASA PTOWN:

WHY A TRIP TO THE TIP OF CAPE COD IS A MUST



Provincetown, The Canteen. Photos by Mike Marcotte

Provincetown, Massachusetts holds a pivotal part in America's history. It was there that pilgrims made their first landing (yep, not Plymouth) back in 1620. In the 20th century, it served as a getaway for the LGBT community. Its role was to be a town where individuals could be themselves without judgement.

Today, Provincetown — commonly called Ptown — is a melting pot of all sexual orientations and cultures. And it's hard to find another place like it. Here are my top ten tips for planning a perfect trip to the tip of Cape Cod.

Go between Labor Day and Halloween.

Provincetown is expensive. During peak season months of June through August, rooms can cost upwards of $750 a night. Plus, many hotels require a two- or three-night stay.

To save cash, business owners recommend visiting between mid-September and Halloween. The cost of a hotel room drops considerably, and it'll be easier for you to get a table for dinner. And bonus: it's still warm.

Another option: New Year's Eve. Efforts by Ptown community leaders to create buzz during the winter can't be ignored, with special events and a handful of restaurants and bed and breakfasts open year-round. Ptown's average high in December is 40-45 degrees, resulting in a warm(er) weather destination for Minnesotans. You'll want to plan a New Year's trip well in advance, as many places do close off-season.

If you're looking for a summer getaway, check out the list of Ptown's various themed weeks, ranging from a women of color festival in June to bear week in July. Many Provincetown residents told me the best week is their Pride celebration, Carnival. The mid-August event attracts nearly 90,000 visitors, which is quite impressive considering only 3,000 people live in Ptown year-round.

Your priority should be finding a place to sleep.

Bed and breakfast spots are common. I stayed at the Secret Garden Inn, located in the epicenter of Provincetown. It was my first B&B experience, and it was refreshing to have a quiet spot to recharge. The owners, Chip and his partner, David, start you off with breakfast (score!) and plenty of restaurant recommendations. And I quickly became acquainted with the other houseguests who were happy to give suggestions.

Boutique hotels are scattered about, most with fewer than 40 rooms. 8 Dyer, located in Ptown's East End, boasts a modern flair. See if you can get the corner room on the second level; it has a jacuzzi in the loft.

The Brass Key was the swankiest of hotels I visited. It has a Palm Springs vibe, where outdoor courtyards are common. It would be easy to spend a whole day on the property.

If you're traveling with a group, consider renting a condo or house. Airbnb and VRBO have options.

Noteworthy: there's no way for you to use your HiltonHonors points

CONTINUED ON PAGE 80

DIANA ROSS

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to get a room in Provincetown. Chain stores, or "formula businesses" as they're legally referred to, are banned. And it's not just hotels: you won't find chain restaurants or big-box retailers, either. The Ben & Jerry's on Commercial Street was grandfathered in to the law.

When plotting where you want to stay, MacMillan Pier and the center of Ptown are located around 310 Commercial Street. Be aware that a block in Ptown is not like a block in your neighborhood. To get from 300 to 400 Commercial Street, it's nearly a third of a mile. Most of the action is from 160 to 400 Commercial Street.

The bars close at 1 a.m., but the party doesn't end then.

All bars in Ptown close at 1 a.m. but for those wanting to party past then, no worries.

After bar close, you'll find an overflow of people looking for a late-night slice at Spiritus Pizza, located near many of the gay bars. The slices are big and only a couple dollars. When the weather cooperates, the party moves out onto their front steps where people watching is prime.

And when I asked Ptown residents about the nightlife, multiple guys told me you'll find an after party somewhere. They're not publicized, so ask around.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 82

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Experience Ptown from (or near) the water.

The main drag in Ptown, Commercial Street, has plenty to offer, but don't forget to head out and enjoy the beauty of Cape Cod.

A dune tour was a highlight of my trip. Art's Dune Tours, an LGBT-owned company, has guided excursions out to the Cape Cod National Seashore for over 70 years. You'll be part of a small group (up to eight) in an SUV with a tour guide who will point out the untouched beauty of the land, which was dedicated by President John F. Kennedy in 1961. The sunset tour is well worth the $49 fee. Your tour guide will pack you a camping chair and Mother Nature provides the entertainment. Make sure your phone is charged to capture the stunning views of sunset on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.



When the water heats up, you'll find kayak and paddleboard rentals along the shore. Explore on your own, take a guided tour, or join a class.

Another way to get out on the water: a whale watching tour. It was my first time going on one, and it was the most tourist-like activity I went on during this trip. The guide on the *Dolphin Fleet* was knowledgeable, but the path whales take is unpredictable, meaning it's a risk as to whether you'll see many whales and snap a photo of a humpback to make your Facebook friends envious. The $47 ticket price is steep for what I saw and the overall entertainment value.

Pack good walking shoes.

Virtually the last thing you need in Ptown is a car, because it's incredibly easy to navigate the city by foot. Commercial Street is jam-packed with food, shopping, and bars for about a mile. Parking along Commercial is scarce and it's a one-way, narrow street with lots of pedestrians.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 84

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Provincetown. Strangers & Saints. 8 Dyer. Sunset.

Wooded bike trails connect the city to the National Seashore, so if you're looking to head up there, a handful of businesses will rent you a bike for the day (check out Arnold's Bikes located near the pier).

From Boston, it's about a two-and-a-half hour drive to Ptown via US 6 (it runs from the end of Cape Cod all the way to the California coast). But driving is not recommended, noting traffic can be brutal, especially in the summer. The best bet: the Fast Ferry. Bay State Cruise Company offers 90-minute trips from Boston to Ptown multiple times a day during their season, which runs mid-May through mid-October. The $88 round-trip price is well worth avoiding the hassle of driving, and there's a bar on-board.

Another way to travel to Provincetown: Cape Air. You'll be able to board their small aircraft in Boston for the 20-minute flight. But be advised, a one-way ticket is commonly more expensive than a round-trip Fast Ferry.

Eat as much as you can.

The most common question when I got back from Provincetown was, "What did you eat?" From seafood to burgers, the locally owned, independent restaurants in Ptown offer a wide variety of food.

The Lobster Pot is the most kitschy restaurant I dined at, but the food gets high remarks. Ask to sit on "the top of the pot" to get a panoramic view of the shore. Try the seafood fettuccine or the Portuguese fish (Portugal has an influence in Provincetown going back centuries).

Strangers & Saints, located on the East End of Commercial Street, is where you'll find Ptown's locals after ending a work shift. Their craft cocktail list is impressive, many named after historic events in the city's past. They serve food late-night, too, which isn't common. The roasted eggplant with tahini sauce was a highlight.

On the West End, Cafe Heaven serves up a tasty lobster hash with poached eggs for breakfast.

Throughout the trip, I asked people where to eat, and kept getting the same answer: The Canteen. Owned by a former newspaper journalist, Rob, and his partner, Loic, the restaurant has a walk-up counter serving up lobster rolls receiving high praise. I had a fried oyster roll served on perfectly toasted thick-cut bread. Delicious. Hidden gem: take your food and eat behind the restaurant where you'll find a communal table (you got to know it's there because it's hard to spot from the street). Loic is expanding that area (on the seashore, by the way) to include a fire pit and additional seating. In the winter, they turn it into a Christmas village.

And there are plenty of snacks up and down Commercial Street. Check out the Penny Patch; they've made fudge on-site for decades.

Pack for any situation. Seriously.

You'll want to strategically plan for what you'll wear. Definitely bring shoes you're comfortable walking in. During the whale watching tour, I wished I had packed gloves, because I quickly found out it gets really cold when you're cruising the Atlantic at 23 miles per hour. For the sunset dune tour, I was glad I grabbed a sweatshirt and would have enjoyed a fourth layer.

Bring cash. Lots of cash.

I hate paying additional ATM fees. My bank already charges me, so when an independent ATM wants me to pay another $3, I get bitter. From what I noticed, Bank of America is the only national bank with an ATM along Commercial Street. My advice: bring cash, and take out more than you think you'll need. Ptown is becoming increasingly expensive, and since it operates as a seasonal destination, you'll find places operating cash-only.

Explore the gay nightlife.

Provincetown is a thriving culture for the gay community.

The Crown & Anchor boasts a hotel, restaurant, cabaret, and various bars. It's home to Miss Richfield 1981 during the summer and draws plenty of big acts including Leslie Jordan and Margaret Cho.

The Boatslip Beach Club is home to Tea Dance, a daily outdoor dance party right on the oceanfront. It's definitely worth paying cover to get in.

The Atlantic House (or A-House) claims to be one of the oldest gay bars in America. Late night, their Little Bar opens up to become a full dance floor. Upstairs is the Macho Bar, a leather-friendly spot. Heads up: the A-House is cash only.

The Gifford House, known as The Porch Bar, is an oasis for locals and is home to a piano bar.

Say hello to strangers.

Remember those who live in Provincetown are the ones serving your dinner and also the same people dancing next to you at A-House. Be friendly and introduce yourself. I received my best recommendations from them.

Commercial Street is perfect for people watching. If you're looking to mingle, take your eyes off your phone and make eye contact with passersby. Chances are you'll see them again, and you never know how the night will end. ■

Find more on Mike's Ptown trip on the Lavender website. He is sharing more photos and advice on Twitter. Follow @mike_marcotte. Thanks to the City of Provincetown and the Provincetown Business Guild for their assistance. The Business Guild has an elaborate guide on navigating Ptown. Connect with them at www.ptown.org.

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Hard to believe, but it has been 20 years since *Rent* blew the lid off musical theater. In 1996, Jonathan Larson's rock musical integrated racial diversity, HIV/AIDS, various sexual orientations, addiction, and economic stratification into a show unlike any Broadway had ever seen. Larson passed away abruptly from an aortic dissection on the morning of the day *Rent* opened for its first Off-Broadway preview performance. Three months later it would open on Broadway and run for a smashing 12 years. Larson would go on to be awarded posthumously the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Awards for Best Musical, Best Book of a Musical, and Best Original Score. *Rent* was inspired to great degree by the opera *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini. Though the movie is wonderful, *Rent* is especially powerful as presented live on stage.



Rent: 20th Anniversary Tour. Photo by Carol Rosegg

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Nijala Sun wrote the solo play *No Child,* which Sonja Parks wowed audiences with at Pillsbury House in recent years. Now, Sun herself is here from the east coast and is the solo actor on stage with her own highly acclaimed solo play, *Pike St.,* at Pillsbury House. As a hurricane threatens New York, mother Evelyn must find protection for her disabled teenage daughter. Evelyn's brother is serving in Afghanistan and sends her money to help her out. However, throughout the piece, Sun portrays numerous characters reflecting on the emergency at hand, as well as considerations about race, immigration, and the inordinate power of big power companies.



Private Lives. Photo by Rebecca Huisken

PRIVATE LIVES

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 88

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Fly by Night: A New Rock Musical. Photo by William Clark

epitomizes high class British sophistication and shines at its most dazzling in *Private Lives* (1930). Coward's elegance and high-class flourish gave us some of the most clever wordplay in the English language, clearly standing on the shoulders of another legendary gay sophisticate, Oscar Wilde.

At Theatre in the Round director Dann Peterson points out that "there has been some speculation that certain aspects of *Private Lives* symbolize homosexuality, and some people say the piece is rife with gay innuendo; although there is no explicit reference to homosexuality in the script. Coward has his characters use a great deal of exaggeration in the play, illustrating the 'camp' sensibility often associated with homosexuality. It is also expressed in the play through the dialogue about what is 'normal.' Amanda (Rachel Postle) insists that 'very few people are completely normal, deep down in their private lives.' One could interpret that as meaning there is no such thing as 'normal' sexuality — thus condoning experimentation and irregularity, at least of that period of time — including homosexuality."

Peterson adds, "Both the characters of Amanda and Elyot (Joe Rux) are rather androgynous, not fitting into the societal expectations of how a husband and wife should behave to each other, at least in 1930. Neither of them conform to what their new spouse's expectations might be. 'Certainly you would like a little quiet womanliness after Amanda,' Sibyl (Dani Pazurek) quips to Elyot. Victor (Rick Lamers) is appalled at the rather masculine beliefs of morality of his new bride, Amanda. Elyot and Amanda both possess an 'alternative' sort of moralism which some critics say can be defined as including homosexuality. Coward's own homosexuality may influence many of these theories."

Stephanie Gleeson plays the juicy role of the French-speaking maid. Peterson is always a sure hand when it comes to directing classic plays, just as Theatre in the Round rates as one of the region's best ongoing producers of the classics.

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www.jungletheater.com

Favorites from the local music scene are in full form in the Jungle's summer rock fable and 2015 Drama Desk nominee for Best Musical, *Fly By Night*. Chris Koza stars in the lead role and John Munson of the New Standards and Semisonic plays in the house band on bass. Other notables include guitarist Dan Schwartz, Jeremy Ylvisaker, and music director Mark Christine on keyboards. Early rock 'n' roll, folk-like guitar, classic musical comedy music style, and the rock theatrical tradition are blended into the aesthetic conjured by its original creators, Will Connolly, MIchael Mitnick, and Kim Rosenstock.

Koza plays a New York sandwich maker caught between two sisters (Royer Bockus and Leah Anderson) from North Dakota during the northeast blackout in 1965. *Fly By Night* is perhaps the most notable touchstone about that unnerving event since the 1968 film, *Where Were You When the Lights Went Out?* and its silky theme song by *The Lettermen*.

Jim Lichtscheidl plays the narrator, having recently returned from London's West End where he played a major role in *Nice Fish* opposite Oscar-winner Mark Rylance. Joshua James Campbell, known for his memorable performance in Jungle's *The Glass Menagerie,* and James Detmar, who gave a hard-edged performance in the Ordway's recent *West Side Story,* round out the cast.

AN AMERICAN IN PARIS

June 13–18
Ordway Center, 345 Washington St.
St. Paul
651-224-4222
www.ordway.org

An American in Paris won six Oscars including Best Picture of 1951. Its music and lyrics by George and Ira Gershwin, with additional music by Saul Chaplin, are among the most beloved of film musicals. The recent smash hit musical film, *La La Land*, compares



An American In Paris. Photo by Matthew Murphy

CONTINUED ON PAGE 92



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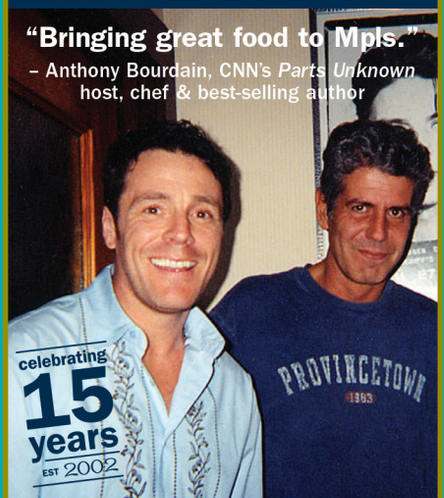


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to *An American in Paris* because of its simple love story that champions romance in a major world city. That itself seems to point to the reality that love and romance are as perennial as the grass. Therefore, it makes sense that *An American in Paris*, originally created for the screen, should be adapted for the stage. Hard to believe it took over 60 years!

In 2015 *An American in Paris* was the most-awarded new stage musical winning four Tony Awards, and (not surprisingly) Christopher Wheeldon won Best Choreography. If you've seen the Vincente Minnelli film starring Gene Kelly, you get an idea of just how beautifully demanding the dance challenges are. The show and film have notable contrasts between vocals and orchestral music. The former includes unforgettable tunes such as "I Got Rhythm," "'S Wonderful," and "But Not For Me." The latter includes "Concerto in F" and "Second Rhapsody/Cuban Overture." If you think you don't know these tunes, you may be mistaken. They are part of our cultural fabric despite all of society's ups and downs over the past half century plus. Just further proof that *An American in Paris* still speaks to timeless themes.

Moreover, how synchronistic that the man who wrote the book for the musical was born in 1951. Craig Lucas is known to musical buffs for his 2005 smash, *The Light in the Piazza*, for which he was Tony-nominated for his book, just as he would come to be Tony-nominated for his *An American in Paris* book. *Lavender* readers may recognize Lucas's name because his gay and bisexually oriented dramas *The Dying Gaul* and *Small Tragedy* were named among the magazine's 10 best productions in years past.



The Pirates of Penzance. Photo by Brian Geving

SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE

June 17–Aug. 20
Guthrie Theater, 818 S 2nd St.
Minneapolis
612-377-2224
www.guthrietheater.org

Randy Harrison is a popular figure in queer entertainment because of his role in Showtime's *Queer As Folk* series. He was also in Minneapolis last year in a beguiling performance as the Emcee in the national tour of *Cabaret* and played Boq in *Wicked* on Broadway. However, local theater audiences actually know him better as young Tom Wingfield in the Guthrie's 2007 revival of *The Glass Menagerie*.

Harrison is back on the Guthrie boards in artistic director Joe Haj's summer musical offering, in Sondheim and Lapine's *Sunday in the Park With George*. He plays the role of French Pointillist painter George Seurat originated in the 1984 Broadway production by Mandy Patinkin. The dynamic Erin Mackey, who threw the proverbial mirror up to the audience in Haj's revival of *South Pacific* last year, will play the musical's other major role, Dot, Seurat's model and lover.

Sunday in the Park with George was innovative in musical theater in 1984. Conceptually it took risks that few Broadway productions ever have. And it's principal conceit is still very powerful: Seurat's 1884 painting, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, is the visual image that the musical's story attunes to. Artistic obsession and patterns between the present and the past are explored to fascinating effect.

Lavender Theater Artist of 2016, Sasha Andreev, and Christine Toy Johnson, named Best Supporting Musical Actress for *South Pacific,* are part of an ensemble that includes other *Lavender* Bests from years past: Ann Michels and T. Michael Rambo. Other musical talents include David Darrow, Cat Brindisi, and Max Wojtanowicz.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

June 22–25
Raspberry Island, 2 Wabasha St., St. Paul
www.onevoicemn.org

On Pride weekend One Voice Mixed Chorus, Minnesota's GLBTA Chorus, presents a gender-bending take on the popular Gilbert and Sullivan opera directed by Gary Briggle. It features a lesbian pirate king and a swarthy sailor crew that arrives by speedboat on the Mississippi River. Eyebrows may go up when we meet the Major General's daughters.

Anita McColley plays the Pirate King. Joselyn Fear plays Major-General Stanley along with Brock Metzger as Frederic and Samuel Baker as Mabel. The production is free admission, although it is suggested that you still contact the website to reserve a space. Bring a lawn chair and gussy yourself up in your pirate costume. Audience members will be encouraged to celebrate and to chow down on delicious food truck selections. ■

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MUSIC

By Kassidy Tarala

STRUGGLING SIRENS



Photo by Wale Agboola

Local musician Chastity Brown brings the soul to rock 'n' roll in her new album *Silhouette of Sirens*, which released on June 2. Written two years ago, *Silhouette of Sirens* delves deep into Brown's emotions. "I was going through a really dark depression. There were wounds from my past that felt as though they had burst open unexpectedly. During this time I was writ-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 96

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Photo by Wale Agboola

ing a lot of material, and I slowly began to realize that what was going on with me made me highly sensitive to other people's struggles and the moments in life that break us and heal us," says Brown.

Brown grew up in a musical family, so it's no wonder that her new album is bursting with talent and passion for the art of music-making. With a jazz/blues singing, pianist, trombone-playing father, pianist sister, and a brother involved in the marching band playing tenor saxophone, Brown grew up surrounded by music. "I think the obsession with music really began when I was twelve. I started playing the saxophone. Each night I would tuck it into bed beside me the way a kid would with a Barbie doll or action figure. When I got my first acoustic guitar at age 15, I subbed it out for the saxophone and the rest is history," Brown says.

Her new album features tracks like "Wake Up," "Drive Slow," "Carried Away," and "Whisper" and combines rock, soul, folk, and R&B through all of its melodies. Brown describes the album as a collection of memories both lived and imagined. While some tracks reflect on painful personal experiences, others are inspired by other people's lives and potential sexual/romantic relationships. The hardships presented in *Silhouette of Sirens* embrace the political by covering topics of identity and belonging. "Just by me being a bi-racial, half-black, half-white woman living in America right now is political. Just being a person of color, a queer woman of color, for that matter, is freaking political," says Brown.

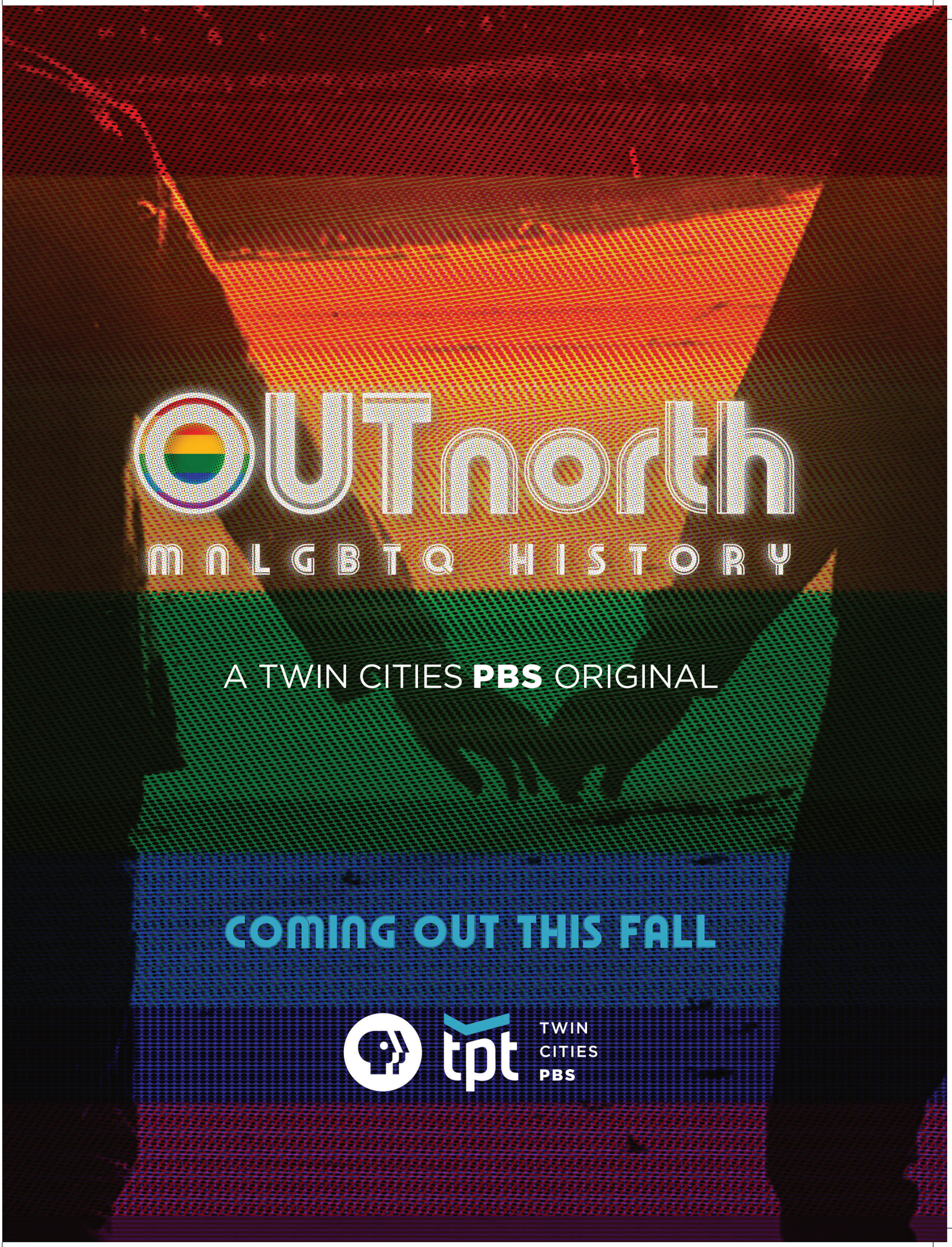
Brown says that she has never worked so hard on her craft or excavated through her emotions as intensely as she was for *Silhouette of Sirens*. While creating this album, Brown says that she was incredibly grateful for the support and influence the community of Minneapolis has had on her career. "The Minneapolis community has been so supportive. I attribute much of my success to the local support. Four years ago when The Current began playing my song 'After You' it received national attention. And because of that it was featured in an HBO/BBC film with Hillary Swank. Following the movie, I began touring parts of Europe. Local support can have a global reach, and I am so very grateful for it," she says.

Brown's video for her single "Carried Away" is available on YouTube, and *Silhouette of Sirens* can be purchased on iTunes and Amazon. Also, photos and other merchandise can be purchased through Red House Records' website, www.redhouserecords.com/artists/chastity-brown. She will also be stopping in Minnesota on multiple dates during her upcoming tour, including June 2 and Aug. 24 in St. Paul, Aug. 26 in Shafer, and Sept. 7 in Winona.

For a soulful rock album that will make you reflect on your own personal experiences while imagining the lives of others and the possibilities that are seemingly endless, you'll want to check out *Silhouettes of Sirens*. Listen to the sweet notes of Brown's voice and find inspiration from the struggles she's faced and gracefully overcome. ■



Photo by Nate Ryan


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SPORTS

By Terrance Griep

FOLLOW THE BOUNCING BALL:

The North American Gay Volleyball Association Serves Equality to Local Players

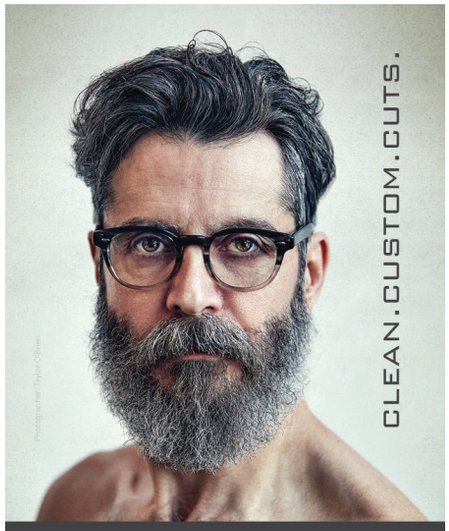


"As many gay people know, sports, especially male sports, are pretty homophobic," Scott Kilburg asserts. "I had been called homophobic slurs while playing in the'90s with straight people."

Sometimes the slurs were less personal but no less disturbing. "Even if it wasn't directed at me, I would still hear homophobic comments thrown around while playing sports growing up," Kilburg recalls. To say that these regular occurrences had a dampening effect on Kilburg's enjoyment would be a gross understatement.

Happily, Kilburg was able to find a league that could de-slur-ify

CONTINUED ON PAGE 100



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Just as gay men can be burdened by ugly stereotypes, so, too, it turns, out, can volleyball players, regardless of their gender identity. "Gay volleyball players are no exception as to how society views us," Kilburg confirms. "We don't fit a prototype for how we should act as we are gay and we are athletes."

the court, the North American Gay Volleyball Association. "I first started playing NAGVA back in 2002," Kilburg, a current member-at-large, remembers. "I had a friend in Des Moines who asked me to play, but I wasn't sure what to think of it. I had been playing with straight people since the early 1990s and didn't realize that NAGVA even existed."

According to its website (www.nagva.org), The North American Gay Volleyball Association is "a not for profit 501(c)(7) organization, committed to promoting and developing the sport of volleyball in the LGBT community. Our membership is diverse and non-exclusionary. NAGVA is an organization of over 17,500 members in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Puerto Rico."

As for Kilburg, his apprehension about joining was quickly spiked into the floor. "The great thing about NAGVA, as well as any other gay sports organization, is it's inclusive for all of the LGBT community," he enthuses. "It provides a place of tolerance where you can also play some competitive ball and make friends while doing it."

NAGVA, Kilburg found, took that "competitive ball" part particularly seriously. "Another great thing about NAGVA is there is a level for everyone," Scott Kilburg points out. "If you just picked up the game or are an experienced college player, you will be put in the division that fits your skill level. And there are definitely cutthroat matches as well as teams just playing to have fun. It's whatever you want it to be."

Another prominent local member, Bill Christman, seconds this emotion. "NAGVA offers a number of divisions to accommodate various skill levels," Christman confirms. "Generally speaking, players at tournaments want to be competitive and do well, but for a lot of people, it is also about the community. Playing over the years, I have developed a number of very close friendships with people from cities all over the country through playing NAGVA."

Joining NAGVA represented the consummation of a love that had begun to take root during the college years of both men. "It was actually in college in the '90s when I started to fall in love with volleyball," Kilburg says. "I had friends who played a lot, and I had played recreationally before high school and enjoyed playing."

Christman's experience runs parallel to his colleague's. "I started playing in a recreational league while I was in college, as a social activity with people who lived in my dorm," he reminisces. His experience in joining was more positive and proactive than Kilburg's. "I had moved back to the Minneapolis area and was looking for opportunities to meet people and expand my social circle. I got involved in the local volleyball community back in 2005 and played my first NAGVA tournament in 2006. I enjoyed the competition and social aspect of the weekend and have kept playing ever since."

A specific reason behind that enjoyment is an important component of Kilburg's enthusiasm. "It's a team sport so it's difficult for one person to be successful if others aren't performing well and vice versa," he acknowledges. "And as team sports usually do, they build camaraderie and I think that's why I fell in love with the sport. I've been able to make friends around the world because of the volleyball."

Just as gay men can be burdened by ugly stereotypes, so, too, it turns, out, can volleyball players, regardless of their gender identity. "Gay volleyball players are no exception as to how society views us," Kilburg confirms. "We don't fit a prototype for how we should act as we are gay and we are athletes. But within the Twin Cities we are fortunate to have a very tolerant volleyball community as many of us gay guys have been playing competitively in the 'straight' leagues and breaking down stereotypes."

The sport's appeal has…matured for both men over the years. "It used to be passion," Kilburg says, describing his evolving relationship with the sport he loves, "but after having shoulder surgery a few years back, it's turned into more of a hobby and I don't play as competitively as I used to. I play now more for fun."

Bill Christman confirms his colleague's evolution. "I'd say it's somewhere between hobby and passion, as well as a social outlet for me," he posits. "I play in local open gyms and tournaments as my schedule permits, but I am also the director for the Minneapolis-hosted NAGVA-sanctioned tournament that takes place in the fall every year, and I also have season tickets to the Gopher women's volleyball team with a group of friends."

But still, his current enthusiasm is something Christman is eager to share. "There are lots of opportunities to get involved in the local gay volleyball community through GLASS — Gay and Lesbian Amateur Sports Society — through open gyms, weekend leagues, and various skill development clinics throughout the year. We are hosting our NAGVA-sanctioned tournament this fall on September 23 and 24," he further reveals. "We typically attract 35 to 50 teams from all over the country for a two-day tournament."

The event is known as the Minnesota Autumn Classic, and, in addition to local teams, will be visited by teams from Atlanta, Chicago, and Saint Louis. And that's not all. In just under a year, the City of Lakes will be home to a most prestigious event. "NAGVA is hosting our end-of-season Championship tournament in 2018 at the Minneapolis convention center," Kilburg declares. "It's over Memorial Day weekend and should be a big event with gay men coming from all around North America. Please watch for details on our website." ■

www.nagva.org
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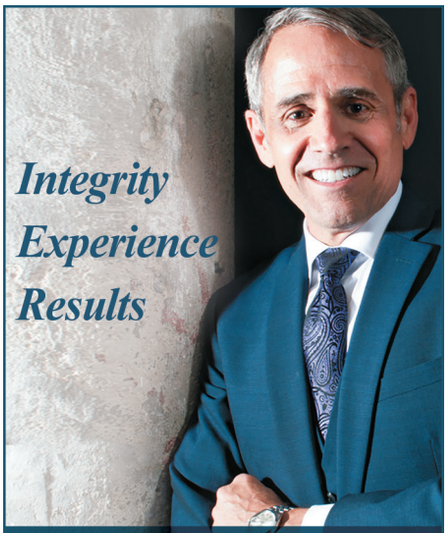
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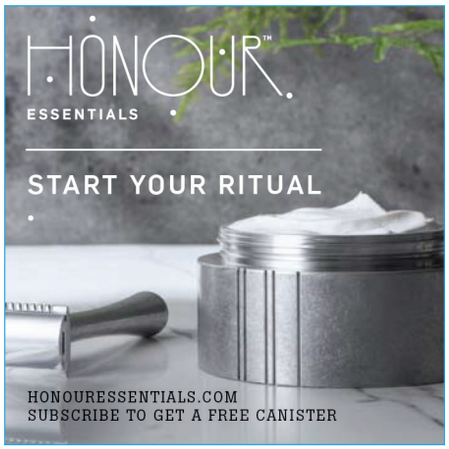
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HEALTH

By Terrance Griep

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The word "spectrum" usually evokes images of rainbows, and rainbows in June evoke images of Pride…but the word spectrum takes on a whole new meaning when cited at the National Center For Gender Spectrum Health, whose mission "is to eliminate gender-based stigma and discrimination, support the development of healthy gender identity development for all across the lifespan, and to improve the quality of health and life of transgender and gender diverse individuals and patients, families, and communities through scientific research, clinical practice, policy work, and education."

For the uninitiated, Katie Spencer, one of the co-directors for the National Center For Gender Spectrum Health and an assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, offers this definition: "The gender spectrum is inclusive of the wide array of gender identities beyond binary definitions of gender — inclusive of cisgender and transgender identities, gender queer, and non-binary identities as a normal part of the natural expression of gender. Gender spectrum health is the healthy, affirmed, positive development of a gender identity and expression that is congruent with the individual's sense of self."

Gender spectrum is a concept that works on a macro and micro level. "Gender spectrum health is a concept that is not only for the individual — cis and trans — but also on a systemic level," Spencer continues. "Society needs to shift to a healthy gender spectrum framework in order to support individual well-being in gender development. The current heteronormative, cisnormative, patriarchal gender binary has huge health costs, not

only for trans and non-binary people, but for cis people as well."

This work takes place in the context of the University of Minnesota's Program in Human Sexuality, which is made up of four major components: research, education, clinical care, and advocacy. "We have a comprehensive clinic where providers see patients with varying challenges: relationship and sexual health therapy, compulsive sexual behavior, gender identity, sexual orientation, pain during sexual activity, recovery from sexual trauma, and many more," lists Eli Coleman, professor, chair, and director of the University of Minnesota Program in Human Sexuality. "Our faculty and professional staff work as a team and represent a variety of backgrounds including psychology, family medicine, psychiatry, marital and family therapy, and education."

This work has become unhappily precious in recent years. In the 1970s, perhaps 50 centers were devoted to the scholarship of human sexuality. Now, just vestiges of these institutions remain, and many of them are dedicated to narrow subject areas such as HIV or other diseases, so this work is particularly resonant for queer folk. "LGBTQ people often have to educate their providers about their own health care concerns," Spencer asserts. "They often have to combat misconceptions and assumptions about their presenting concerns, and often experience inappropriate curiosity about their bodies and their sexualities."

Ignorance can sprout where it might do the worst damage. "A lot of providers lack information about trans and non-binary bodies and culture, and misinformation about treatment and lack of care can translate to negative health outcomes," Spencer continues. "As a result, many LGBTQ people do not feel comfortable or welcome or safe pursuing health care."

Sometimes that threat can even border on the existential, according to Diane Berg, co-founder and Ph.D., who adds, "We are focusing across the lifespan and want to expand initiatives in the area of clinical work, education, policy, and research that can help revolutionize the gender climate for people of all ages, from children to elderly people, who are often left out but face unique challenges."

One of the challenges in exploring those challenges is procuring capital. "Funding for sexual health research has always been difficult because of the controversy of the subject matter," Coleman reports. "While the Program has been able to secure funding for HIV prevention research, other areas of sexual health have been difficult to secure. Scientific research into these problems inform public policies that are aimed at improving sexual health and overall health."

Fortunately, an organization has stepped into the fiscal breach. "The Chicago-based TAWANI Foundation, founded by philanthropist Col. (IL) Jennifer N. Pritzker, IL ARNG (Retired) has donated $3 million to the nationally recognized Program," a recent press release announced. "Half of the money will be immediately available. The other half will be made available when the program matches the pledge with other donations. In total, this gift could bring in nearly $5 million to support sexual health research, education and care at the University."

"With help from the TAWANI Foundation's generous gift, we're going to develop solutions rooted in research for the myriad of sexual health problems people face in this country," said Coleman. "We're fortunate and grateful to now have endowed funds that will sustain our goal of improving quality of life and health outcomes." This allows the critical exploration of the gender spectrum to continue…for now. ■

For more information, go to www.sexualhealth.umn.edu/national-center-gender-spectrum-health



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By Steph Sianko, MA, LADC

Pride Season: Watch for Alcohol Poisoning

Alcohol poisoning, also known as alcohol overdose is caused by high amounts of alcohol being consumed in a short amount of time. The risk of alcohol poisoning varies by gender, ethnicity, age, amount of food consumed, tolerance, rate of consumption, and use of other drugs. Binge drinking is more common for college students and those under the age of 20 putting them at a higher risk of poisoning.

Alcohol is a depressant that is absorbed quickly in the human body. Even though it is absorbed quickly, it takes longer for alcohol to be processed. When alcohol has stopped being consumed, the alcohol level will continue to increase in the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body. When there is an excess of alcohol in the bloodstream, breathing, heart rate, and body temperature can be negatively affected. It is important to know that alcohol poisoning can be fatal and can occur even before passing out. Drinking coffee, sleeping it off, walking it off, and/or taking a cold shower are not effective methods for reversing the effects of alcohol poisoning. Alcohol poisoning should be considered an emergency because not only can it lead to death, but choking, severe dehydration, and brain damage as well.

Seek medical help immediately if someone has any of the following symptoms:

- Confusion
- Seizures
- Vomiting
- Slow breathing (less than eight breaths a minute)
- Irregular breathing (a gap of more than 10 seconds between breaths)
- Hypothermia (low body temperature)
- Blueish skin color or paleness
- Cannot be awakened, unconscious

What to do in an emergency:

- Call 911
- Let the medical professionals know when the alcohol was consumed and the amount
- Do not leave the person alone
- Try to keep the person awake
- If they are vomiting, don't allow them to stay on their back. Sit them upright. ■

Steph Sianko, MA, LADC is an IOP addiction counselor at The Pride institute. For more information, go to www.pride-institute.com.

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HEALTH

By Terrance Post, LADC



CHEMSEX

FUELING SEXUAL COMPULSIVITY

An increasing number of men who have sex with men (MSM) are taking part in a combination of drug use and sexual behavior. Recently termed Chemsex, the use of chemicals to "enhance sexual pleasure" results in an insatiable sexual appetite.

This epidemic is afflicting the U.S. and made worldwide headlines in 2016 when a 35-year-old attorney in London lost his 18-year-old boyfriend to this very experience. Sexualized drug use commonly involves crystal methamphetamine and GHB, which create a phenomenal experience where the struggles and sexual inhibitions common in MSM are overrun by a rush of dopamine and other neurotransmitters creating a sexual experience that will last from hours to days at a time.

Those engaging in Chemsex often report everything about sex feeling amazing, where ejaculations are explosive, and encounters are endless. The highly addictive drugs used allow their user to stay up for days at a time engaging in sexual activity the entire time, almost immediately after use. Sex without the drugs becomes impossible, and the relief that sex brings becomes one's most important need.

The powerful sexual arousal, commanding energy, and extreme sense of self lead the user to become powerless over their erotic temptation, sexual behavior, and drug use. Sex becomes a person's prime means for validation, excitement, pleasure, and meaning which nothing else compares to, creating an irresistible urge to have one's needs met.

Causes

The highly subjective reasons MSM are led to Chemsex come down to the pursuit to have pleasurable good old-fashioned sex. Loneliness, internalized homophobia, body dysphoria, attachment insecurities, and trauma create a dangerous cocktail which makes having pleasurable sex painful. The moments before, during, and after sober sex place a person in a highly vulnerable situation in which their deepest psyche is exposed and open to ridicule.

Classified as a disinhibitor, the gay party drug crystal meth or "Tina" is a way to overcome any issue which makes having pleasurable, enjoyable sex difficult. Methamphetamine literally makes its user feel insanely powerful and amazingly beautiful like the god Zeus, where there is not a thing in the world that can stand in their way.

Additionally, Chemsex allows a person to play out sexual desires and fantasies which seem so taboo and stigmatized that doing so sober creates too much stress and fear, that arousal isn't possible. When using methamphetamine, a person can overcome intimacy issues, shame, loneliness, and fears of rejection, cope with the effects of past sexual abuse, and overcome the stigma associated with HIV. The neurobiological need for connection is accomplished, and then some, by combining drugs and sex.

Consequences

With all things this insanely pleasurable come the consequences. At the very least Chemsex leads to drug addiction. People involved in Chemsex often go to great extremes in risk-taking because inhibi-

tions are absent, lust overtakes both empathy and deliberative decision-making, causing a person to go to far greater sexual lengths than they would have without drugs. This fuels unprotected sex, disregard for partner selection, and a sexual climax the user will chase for the rest of their life without being able ever to find again.

The Catch-22 with Chemsex is that eventually the very thing MSM engaging in Chemsex sought becomes unachievable, and where staying hard even becomes a futile battle. It significantly increases risk of HIV exposure, even to different strains to those already positive, as well as unknowingly placing both drugs and sex above all other needs and life functions causing family and relationship struggles, work conflicts, and financial burdens of $90,000 annually on average. Then if these are not enough, I see many clients seeking treatment due to the inevitable psychosis which comes with Chemsex, "jumping off a three-story rooftop believing I am being chased by dogs and the FBI" may fatally destroy the very thing these men seek.

Treatment

At The Pride Institute, we believe for a person to overcome their connection between chemicals and sex, it can be excruciatingly difficult but absolutely possible. Meth use in MSM has one of the highest rates of recidivism even for those who sought treatment. Most substance abuse treatment programs do not incorporate the important element of sexual behavior and MSM-specific issues when treating substance use disorders. As a result, only the drug use is treated; however, once the drug is removed, a person now has this need for sex and connection without the mindset, skills, and ability to achieve it. One can only go so long before sexual desire catches up with them and the only way they know how to get it is by using chemicals.

The connection between meth use and all elements of sexual behavior including hookup apps and the party scene, in the brain, make it impossible to have one without the other. Breaking this connection while learning how to have pleasurable sex without the use of drugs is paramount in achieving long-term sobriety. At Pride we specialize in treating Chemsex and sexual compulsivity by helping MSM learn how to balance harm with gratification, build confidence, overcome homophobia, and gain a sense of sexual adventure all while possessing a sense of pleasure, stamina, and endurance.

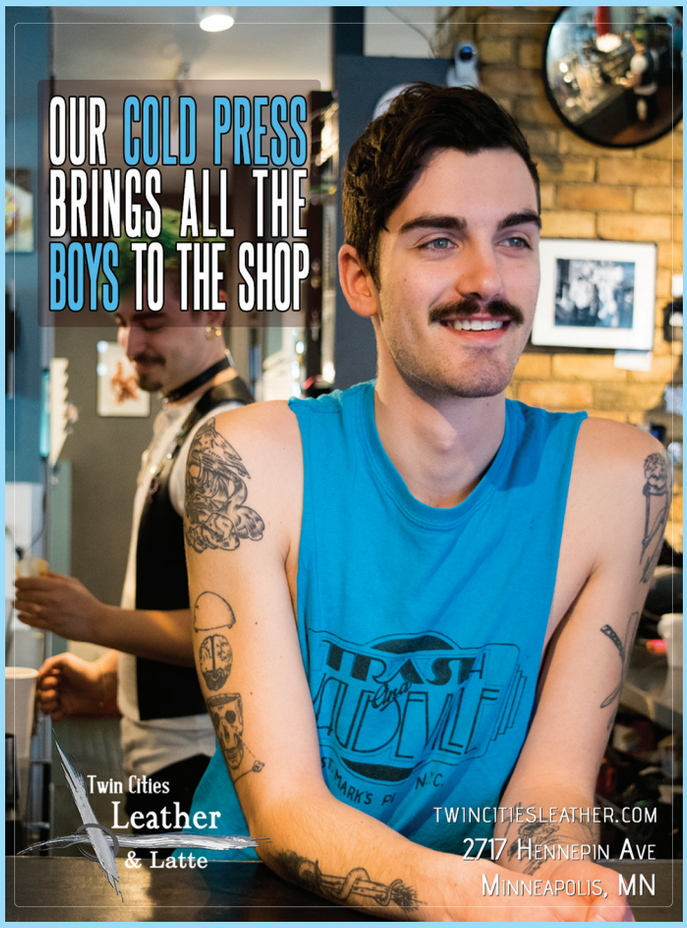
My experience in working with MSM at Pride puts me in a place where I can comfortably say that even the hopeless addict who has been to treatment 15+ times in their life has hope in overcoming this beast and living a happy, fulfilling life all while enjoying close, wild, pleasurable, and intimate sex. I can't count the number of clients who have come back and said that the sex they have always wanted, felt wired for, and desired for as long as they can remember has become a purely intense more fulfilling erotic experience, whether it involves a sling, a pup mask, numerous partners, or simply passionate sex with a life partner that they finally enjoy day after day.

Hope is there, and so is our community. One thing our community can do is see those involved in Chemsex as good people going to great, but harmful, lengths to get what the majority of people have. By not doing this we push these men back into yet another closet. ■

Terrence Post, LADC is a substanceabuse and Chemsex counselor at The Pride Institute. For more information, go to www.pride-institute.com.

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HEALTH

By Shane Lueck



Photos courtesy of DeAndré Morris



BRO

Taking Knowledge to the Community

Hatred toward gay people is not unique to a race or culture. But are there unique factors at play in specific cultural communities in regard to attitudes toward GLBT people? The answer is complex, but DeAndré Morris acknowledges the highly publicized historical taboo of homosexuality within the African American community.

As program coordinator for Brothas Reaching Out (BRO), a new outreach program launched by the African American AIDS Task Force, Morris grapples with how to distribute safer sex information to men who have sex with men within the African American community. A recent transplant to the Metro, Morris has observed that the "down low" scene has presented its challenges to his work.

"I can't just set up a booth and stop someone and ask if they'd like to talk about a program or information for men who have sex with men," he says. "No. They get defensive: 'That ain't me, man.' It's not going to work."

BRO is working to take knowledge and personal stories out into the community for better impact and results on the fight against HIV and STDs. "Our target population is 18 and older, black men who have sex with men, who are HIV-positive or at-risk of infection," Morris adds. "We felt that there was a need to apply for a grant and be granted a program that serves the African American, SGL population."

The term "same gender loving" (SGL) emerged in the early 1990s with the intention of offering black women who love women, and black men who love men, a way of identifying with the uniqueness and intersectionality of black culture and homosexuality or bisexuality. According to Morris, the Twin Cities' African American SGL population had nothing, no type of program, no type of format that they could use to navigate within the community.

"The executive director (of AAATF) and I felt that it was important to apply for a grant for this program to particularly be here at the Task Force, which is a culturally specific organization to begin with," Morris says. "With this being our pilot year, it's been a little challenging to navigate the program, but now since I've been out there, communicating with people in the community, with people within the black SGL community, I have a better idea how to serve our purpose."

He adds, "We know that statistics from the CDC show that the African American SGL male community is the highest percentage infected. So the unique aspect of this program is actually getting out there. Most programs are so housed in their own office and think they have to come to us. The unique component about this program is that we go to them, hence the reason we have peer advocates. They specifically go into the community, they do street outreach, they do peer-to-peer outreach, they go to presentations at different agencies. They're in the community. That's what this program is all about."

BRO has two two main objectives: to increase the use of condoms among black SGL men, and to decrease risky sexual behaviors in the same segment. Role model stories are an important factor in reaching those objectives. Morris interviewed other African American SGL men in the community, collected and transcribed their stories, and is distributing them within the community.

"They're not stories that have been handed down from Hennepin County or the Department of Health," he says. "These are very unique. I have a total of four stories. They're not all the same. It's not one of those, 'and the moral of the story is I started using condoms.' No. All of the stories are formatted differently; they're told through different eyes. When people read these stories, they're intrigued, they want to move to the next steps of getting tested. Or if they've fallen out of care, after they read the stories and talk to peer advocates, it's 'how can I get back into care? How can I be sure my sexual health is well taken care of?' We're really trying to reach the men in this community and keep them in care or on PrEP. That is our main focus with our objectives."

In addition to distributing the role model stories, BRO's street outreach team hands out safe sex kits, brochures and materials, and works events, such as Pride, that have a high attendance of African American SGL men. So far, the street outreach team has received extremely positive feedback. Morris says, "People feel like it's a magnificent program, the feedback has been magnificent."

Anyone interested interested in being involved as a peer advocate or talking about the role model stories should directly reach out to Morris. He adds, "We're moving into our second year and we're always looking for more interested parties." ■

DeAndré Morris, BRO Program Coordinator / African American AIDS Task Force / 2400 Park Ave. S, Minneapolis / 612-825-2052 / dmorris@aaatf.org

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COMMUNITY

By Terrance Griep



Photo courtesy of Nadia Honary

A MANY-SPLENDORED THING:

The Bisexual Organizing Project Tries to Take the 'Bi' Out of 'Bisexual'



Photo courtesy of Shawna McNamara

Love is a many-splendored thing, according to poets and pundits aplenty, something members of a community composed of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, and others, know very well. But one of those sub-splendors is itself a many-splendored thing, so says the Bisexual Organizing Project, or BOP, whose mission is to "build, serve, and advocate for an empowered bisexual, pansexual, fluid, queer, and unlabeled (bi+) community to promote social justice."

The B-word is often misunderstood, or perhaps misinterpreted, by the general public, and even by other members of the LGBTQ family. "Many people define bisexuality differently to fit their individual identity, but in general, it is the attraction to more than one gender," explains Sally Corbett, support administrator of the Bisexual Organizing Project. "BOP uses the term 'bi+' as an umbrella term for all of the different labels used by people attracted to more than one gender, including, but not limited to, bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, polysexual, fluid, queer, and unlabeled folks."

All of these prescriptions might seem confusing at first glance, even overwhelming, but each is necessary. "The bisexual community includes all of these identities," Sally Corbett insists. "Bisexual is the term that has been around the longest, and is the one most people are at least a little familiar with. Language and labels have historically been divisive and controversial in the bi+ community, and the term 'bi+' endeavors to repair these rifts. As individuals, our identities are self-defined, and which labels we claim, or don't, is up to us before it is up to any agreed-upon definitions."

Does this broad acceptance lead to a community too dissolute to commune? Corbett doesn't think so. She says, "To someone unfamiliar with identity politics and language, it might seem like the point of inclusivity is to parse the community into finer and finer pieces, until we have an alphabet soup of identities, but this is not inclusivity in actuality. We use labels to unite in community, not further divide it. We want to acknowledge and validate how labels are meaningful to individuals, but not miss the forest for the trees."

BOP seeks not merely a warm, fuzzy affirmation for bisexuals, but an acknowledgment of the demographic's very existence. "It is true that bisexual erasure and bi invisibility are significant obstacles faced by our community," Corbett points out. "We experience bi erasure and biphobia from both mainstream, heterosexual society, and the gay and lesbian community. Bisexual erasure and invisibility are the denial and dismissal of bi+ individuals, due to assumptions and misunderstandings about bi+ identities. This contributes to severe health disparities, marginalization, and creates barriers to access of LGBTQ resources."

The thought of any phobia leaking from one wavelength of the queer rainbow into another is disturbing, but all too real. "Bi+ people make up more than 50 percent of the LGBTQ community, but funding for bi+ organizations and programs is among the lowest of any LGBTQ demographic," Corbett observes. "Our community has specific needs that aren't being met, due to these obstacles."

One way to cope with such obstacles, then, is to build a community within a community. "We organize to build community, and in turn, serve and advocate for our community," Corbett elaborates. "Mainstream LGBTQ resources and organizations severely underserve the bi+ community, and there is a critical need for support for bi+ specific issues. BOP's mission is to fill this need so the bi+ community can grow strong and thrive."

And the lion's share of that growing-strong is achieved by simply growing. "As an organization we're eager to keep learning, growing, pushing boundaries, and challenging ourselves to better serve our community," Corbett reports. "We always have tons of stuff going on and love seeing new faces!"

Those faces and places contribute to a state of heightened stimulation. "BOP is a really exciting organization to be involved with!" Corbett bubbles. "I am continually inspired and invigorated by the work we do and the people I get to do it with. We're moving in a bold and ambitious direction this year and making a lot of things happen."

These relatively large steps are always preceded by smaller ones. "Showing up and speaking out about ourselves and our experiences is the most effective way to advocate for ourselves, and is instrumental in furthering awareness and understanding," Corbett says about BOP's meetings. "People need to see and hear bisexuals to know we exist, and this is how we directly fight biphobia, bi erasure, and bi invisibility."

Where that seeing and hearing are concerned, outreach is key. "Understanding is definitely the first step toward acceptance," Sally Corbett insists. "Much of the stigma we face stems from myths, stereotypes, and misconceptions about bi+ people and what it means to be bi+. Some of BOP's key programs are also geared toward education, like our Bi+ Essentials presentation, which is a training we provide for LGBTQ organizations to equip them to better serve their bi+ clients."

Discussion group topics aspire to be self-informing, without drifting into self-indulgence. Corbett says, "We try to have topics that are seasonally relevant. For instance, March was Bisexual Health Awareness Month, so the topic was about bi+ health. In November we talked about our experiences surrounding being bi+ during the holidays, such as dealing with family, parties, going home, and stuff like that."

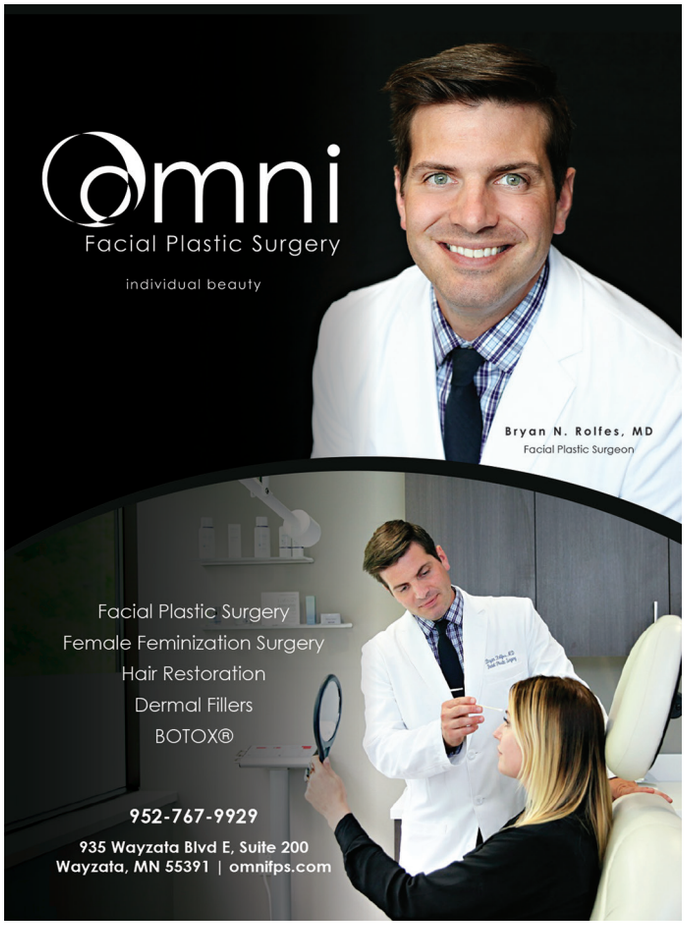
Another form of communication, the written word, is the core for another kind of get-together. "I'm not personally involved in the biweekly writing group," Corbett reports, "but for me, writing is the strongest tool I wield in my activism work. I have a strong background in writing, especially in academic and activist disciplines. I draw confidence from writing, and trying to master language as a means to put ideas into the world is very empowering to me."

People interested in connecting with BOP might find a particular venue particularly advantageous. "The discussion group is a great place for BOP first-timers," Corbett declares. "It's a really inviting atmosphere, and the discussion itself is pretty informal and relaxed. You get to meet new people and hear their stories, and everyone is welcome to contribute. It's great if you just want to sit and listen too!"

And naturally, BOP will be expressing its Pride this month. "We need folks to march with us in the Pride parade this year and attend our annual conference," Corbett declares. Describing BOP's annual, community-building conference, she continues, "BECAUSE is happening at Metro State University Sept. 28 through Oct. 2 this fall! We can be found on Facebook, Twitter (@biorgproject and @BECAUSEconf), and Meetup!"

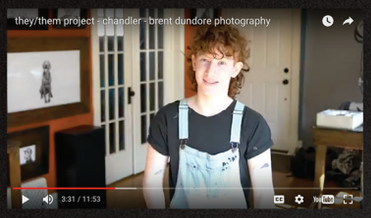
Corbett concludes, "Working with BOP has been one of the most fulfilling, gratifying, and meaningful experiences of my queer life. This organization has helped me to discover so much about myself, connect with others, and find community; all things that are critically important for bisexual individuals to not only survive, but thrive. I will always be excited about working for BOP, because I will always know that we are making a difference in our community. Knowing I get to be a part of making this difference perpetually fuels my passion for BOP, and for building, supporting, and advocating for the bisexual community." ■

For more information about BOP and the various ways you can get involved, go to www.bisexualorganizingproject.com.





Chandler Daily - 3.3.17



Watch interviews and see the full project:
TheyThemProject.org

By Andy Lien

THE THEY/THEM PROJECT:

AN INTERVIEW WITH BRENT DUNDORE

PRODUCED BY BRENT DUNDORE PHOTOGRAPHY

What is the "They/Them Project"?

Brent Dundore: The "They/Them Project" was created for individuals who currently or formally use they/them/theirs and other non-binary pronouns, offering a platform for them to tell their stories and give personal insight to those wanting to better understand how pronouns (and other words and actions) affect transgender and non-binary individuals.

How were you inspired to make this project come to fruition?

BD: I realized I had my own ignorance and lack of acceptance of non-binary gender and wanted to change that for myself. It stemmed from my own coming out story, not with gender, but sexuality (two completely separate things, for anyone who is new to understanding these subjects).

When I came out people didn't ask me the questions which would have enabled them to better understand me and my non-binary sexuality. Telling family and friends of my attraction to men was confusing to some, as my partner at the time was a woman. She knew I was also attracted to men from the beginning of our relationship. Sooner or later I felt the need to share that part of myself with everyone else as well.

After that relationship came to an end most people found it easiest to label my sexuality "gay," and at times even define me as such. "This is my gay _____ (insert relationship), Brent," or at best, "This is Brent, he is gay." Thus, I experienced firsthand that it is human nature to want to label people, and how certain labels can affect people.

Today I am married to a man, but gay is still a label I don't feel describes me, and one that shows a lack of understanding of who I am. Over the years labels have not only affected me, but have also hurt me.

This all relates to starting the project, because when I first heard of people who use they/them/theirs pronouns, I had a lack of understanding, ignorance, and sometimes judgement regarding the subject. When asked what I felt about people wanting to use such pronouns, my response was "people can be whatever they want, but you can't make up a new gender, or pronouns."

My husband knew my coming out story, and how labels affected me over the years. After he heard my initial opinion on non-binary pronouns, he immediately stopped me and asked if I was joking. He then stated, "After all you've dealt with regarding labels, how would you have the right to tell someone else what they can and can't be?" Right that second, I decided my opinion needed to change.

About three months ago I was shooting for one of my fine art projects and learned that my subject preferred they/them/theirs pronouns. I asked if I could ask some personal questions about that. I learned a lot about their journey and use of pronouns. After the photo shoot I was looking through all the photos and saw one that spoke to me. It was there that the "They/Them Project" was born.

I asked another person who uses they/them/theirs pronouns to come in for the project. I again asked various questions to personally better understand their story, and how they came to use their pronouns. After working with them for the fine art shoot, I was looking through the images, and thought to myself, "These images do make me think about this person, they are everything I want visually, but they don't answer the questions I had about gender." It was then that I realized I needed to document those questions I myself had been asking, if I wanted to really make a difference for anyone else who might have the same lack of understanding I had.

Since the second shoot, I ask those questions to every person I photograph, making the interviews the focus of the project. I would have been grateful if people had asked me questions about my sexuality in order to better understand me. This is now the mindset I bring to all the interviews.

What other projects have you done or are you currently doing? How does this project differ from those?

BD: Previously, my "Marry Us Campaign" was a photo booth style project which helped individuals share the message of marriage equality. The goal was to use the image to start a conversation about how it would affect them personally. Currently, I have two other endeavors in addition to the "They/Them Project." "Broadway Legacy" celebrates African American Broadway artists, who many times are overlooked in the industry, some of whom happen to be Tony Award winners. Lastly my "Why I Ride Project" stems from my past position working for the Red Ribbon Ride (a nonprofit bike ride that raises money for several AIDS service organizations in Minnesota). This project gives individuals participating in the ride the chance to show why they do it and ask for donations for the cause.

The "They/Them Project" differs from the other projects in the overall look, video interviews, and targeted audience. I feel it also differs in the way it is personal to each subject, and how it is shared through social media.

What have been some surprising moments along the way?

BD: I have yet to finish an interview without learning something new about gender, and how every person has a uniquely different story and description of their gender. I was surprised to learn that some use several sets of pronouns, and how truly fluid gender is. No one is an expert on someone else's gender, or what gender means to someone else. Everyone is also always growing and changing.

What have been some humbling moments in the process?

BD: The first time I watched someone who was non-binary watch one

CONTINUED ON PAGE 126









of the interviews, I saw how they kept nodding their head, and, at times, smiling wholeheartedly, showing how much they related to parts of what they were watching. I realized then, that in the least, this project could speak to non-binary individuals, letting them know there are others out there who are looking at and discovering some of the same types of things they are.

I also recently had a humbling experience when asked to be interviewed for Twin Cities Pride Podcast. The host wanted to ask me questions about myself and the project, but I suggested we keep it as much about the individuals as possible. We gathered six people from the project to speak. It was a truly unique experience, and I highly recommend that everyone listen to the TC Pride podcast!

Who is the audience for this project?

BD: I hope this project speaks to everyone. Youth questioning their gender can look to this project to see that they are not alone, and how others have gone through their journey and are now flourishing. Some from older generations might know about gender, but in many cases, they still have questions they are afraid to ask non-binary individuals. This projects gives answers to those questions. Finally, others might view this project and for the first time see that non-binary people are real. They are as much non-binary as others are male or female. Watching these interviews gives everyone the chance to better understand that.

How do you imagine the audience will experience the people you're introducing them to?









BD: Some will nod in appreciation. For those people, I imagine they are feeling acknowledged, accepted, respected, and loved. Others who are watching the interviews may say, "I did not know that!" They likely felt they never had the opportunity to ask the questions to individuals themselves. Some will shake their head "No." I hope these people continue watching, as they will see how people are describing simply who they are, giving us more reason to accept and love everyone.

Where do you see this project going?

BD: I have had conversations and meetings with several different organizations about how this project could be brought to the masses. I'm very excited about the energy of the project and where it is going.

What do you need from the community?

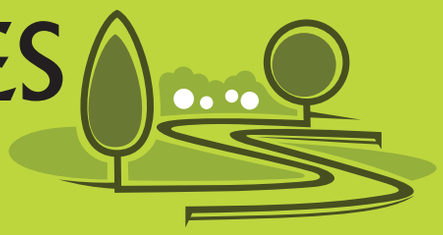
BD: Share the project every time you see it! Especially if you watch an interview, share it through social media with a message about something you personally learned, asking others to watch and do the same. It's so easy, and you'll be surprised by the comments people leave, as they are grateful for what they learned from the interview as well. I'm hoping to include more youth, more people of color, more people who are 40 and older. Please share the project with these people and have them contact me through the website.

Where can we find this project?

BD: You can find it at www.theythemproject.org, www. facebook.com/theythemproject, and www.brentdundore.com. ■

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DATING

By Haley Steinhardt

LOVE IS ABOUT EVERYONE:

Celebrity Love Architect Launches New Division



Photo by Dani Warner

If you've watched reality TV in the last several years, you may already know Kailen Rosenberg. This passionate, highly acclaimed Celebrity Love Architect worked with Oprah to transform the love lives of an entire town in the award-winning show *Lovetown, USA*, and she has also appeared on the likes of E! Network's *Kardashians* and *Stewarts & Hamiltons*. Kailen's personal mission is to transform the world when it comes to love. Until recently though, her work has been with the straight community.

"I have so many dear friends who are gay," says Kailen, "but I had never matched a gay couple and I didn't want to presume that I could tap into something professionally that was outside of my personal experience."

That all changed in 2017. Kailen experienced an awakening in what was possible for her Love Architects firm. "This wave came over me and I knew I had no choice but to be a much larger voice for the *truth* that love is love, no matter your sexual orientation," Kailen says. "Simply knowing this in my heart wasn't enough; it was time to create a division to represent the LGBT community and with honor and pride."

The Love Architects firm includes Kailen and a whole team of highly trained, professional, and compassionate love experts, including her son, Andrew. "We have the male/female, yin and yang approach to dealing with everything in the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual realms to put the right partners together," Kailen shares.

When you work with a Love Architect, you have the opportunity to redesign your love life from the inside out, identifying what has held you back in the past from finding the ideal partner (which everyone can) then acknowledging where you are now when it comes to love and envisioning where you want to be.

It all starts with Kailen's new Real Reveal test, which invites people to dig deeper into where they are in their personal love evolution:

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Real Reveal LIGHT entails 15 questions and is available now. The full Real Reveal test launches soon with 89 questions that delve even deeper to show people both single and married not only their current love-evolution stage, but also which direction they are moving: toward or away from being and attracting the best of love that is waiting with their current partner, or a new Life Mate.

From there, your personal Love Architect will walk you through every aspect of your relationship readiness, including compassionately addressing your personal style and your living space and helping you to redesign and reimagine where necessary. Next, the search for your perfect partner is on.

Working with a professional Love Architect is not inexpensive, nor is it for the faint of heart, but if you're sick of the bars, the hookup apps, and past relationships hitting wall after wall, you may be ready for a professional matchmaking service of this kind. Kailen's *elite* matchmaking services start at $100,000 for a Global Soul Mate Search, though the firm is also available to customize a program for those who are serious about finding love. "We customize programs to fit just about every budget," says Kailen, "so all can experience the love they deserve."

To add to the fun, The Love Architects just launched The Lodge Social Club, a new and private online and brick-and-mortar country club for single professionals to meet and mingle. With events like cocktail hours, group hikes, and coffee dates, plus access to renowned celebrity experts in fashion, beauty, and relationships, the club offers a welcome break from the world of commercial online dating and mainstream matchmaking. With several locations opening soon all over the United States and internationally, The Lodge Social Club's home base (as well as The Love Architects headquarters) is right here in Minneapolis on the historic Calhoun Beach Club property. Online club membership starts at $60/month with a $100 annual fee (coming late this summer) and personalized brick-and-mortar programs begin at $2,500 and up.

Initial interviews and assessments for entry range from $250 to $1000 depending on the level of expert and service you'd like to undertake with The Love Architects, and this includes a triple background check: criminal, identity, and financial. "We want you to have a peaceful, flowing relationship without having to worry about any hidden drama once natural chemistry has taken place," says Kailen. A portion of the firm's gross revenue every year goes to charities such as Ronald McDonald House Families and St. Joseph's Home for Children. ■

To learn more about Kailen Rosenberg, The Love Architects, and The Lodge Social Club, visit www.TheLoveArchitects.com and www.TheLodgeSocialClub.com.

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With a passion for bringing this world to a higher place when it comes to love, she's excited to announce the opening of the LGBTQ 'soulmate connection' through The Love Architects and The Lodge Social Club.

She can't wait to see you madly in love!



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WEDDING

By Terrance Griep

GRINDING TO A VAULT:

A Modern Couple Make a Lifelong Commitment

Photos by Melissa Hesse of Rivets and Roses

Maybe it started with self-written wedding vows, it being the love story of Gerald Strauss and Brian Strempke. "We did write our own vows and this was very important to me," Gerald remembers. "I think that when couples write their own vows it really helps set the tone for the celebration and I wanted to make sure that people knew why we were getting married to each other."

And that formalized pledge was no flight of fancy. "I worked on my vows for a couple of weeks and I was overjoyed with how Brian and our guests received them," Gerald continues. "The process of writing our wedding vows was very unique to how Brian and I do work. I had my vows written down and didn't touch them once I printed off the paper, but Brian was making last-minute corrections all the way up until the ceremony started. We even have a photo of our printed vows, last minute corrections included!"

Or maybe it — the love story, remember — started with the rising of Yuletide. "Christmas is our favorite holiday by a long shot and Brian can become very excited by receiving gifts," Gerald reports. "Brian has absolutely no patience so it's really fun to wrap presents early and taunt him." Ah, love.

This taunt was more strategy than sadism. "Well, I decided to do just this with an engagement ornament and rings!" Gerald enthuses. "I went on to Etsy and ordered an engagement ornament — I then wrapped the ornament with Hershey's Hugs & Kisses and placed the gift under the tree two weeks before gift opening. Talk about making a person anxious!"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 134

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The pulling of this particular Christmas Story's Red Ryder's trigger did not shoot anyone's eye out. "The proposal was very sweet, and I don't think Brian expected it, which was perfect!" Gerald recalls. "Our dog, Buddy, got into some of the chocolate so we had to remove it from his mouth, and being the submissive boy that he is, decided to release his bladder right there on the living room floor 30 seconds after Brian said, 'Yes!'"

Or maybe the love story started with two, tech-savvy men. "Brian and I are a Grindr success story!" Gerald declares. "I thought I would take a chance at messaging an empty profile, and there was Brian. Whoever would have thought that I would have been so fortunate to have random luck?"

Things progressed in the usual way from there, kind of. "After our initial chatting we FaceTimed a couple of times before our first date at Broder's Pasta Bar," Gerald discloses. "We both really enjoy cooking and food so Broder's was a natural choice. Our first date went wonderfully. The dinner and conversation were fantastic. After sharing tiramisu for dessert, we walked around Lake Harriet. It was a beautiful night with a beautiful sunset."

This led to a formalized bonding that, in retrospect, seemed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 136



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inevitable. “We were really looking forward to celebrating with our friends and family,” Gerald reminisces. “The wedding was such a major event that we were really looking forward to the day finally arriving!”

Still, hindsight has proven 20/20 for both men. “It was the most perfect day,” Gerald gushes. “Everything went by so perfectly. While we were sitting in our room waiting to walk to the ceremony our guests were posting pictures online and it was so awesome to see, and I’ll never forget it.”

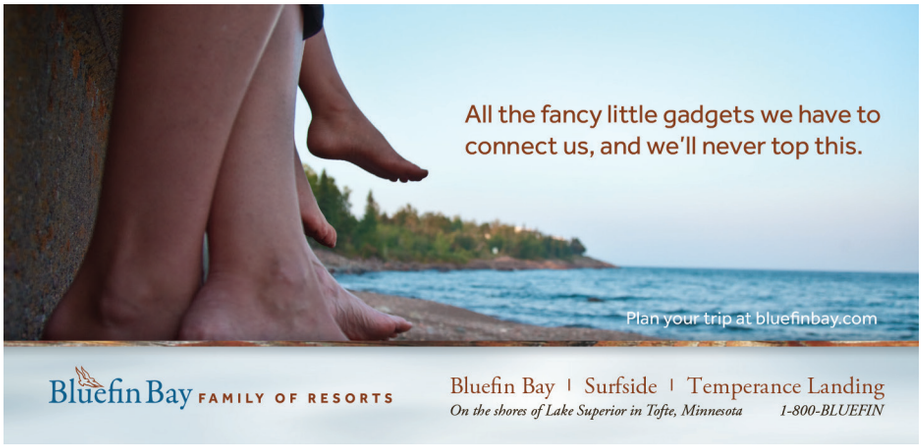
The ceremony that ensued was meant to reflect the inner workings of the soon-to-be-minted couple. “The wedding that we created was exactly what we wanted, and if we ever did it again, I would want a repeat!” Gerald insists. “I wanted a big party with all my friends and family celebrating this amazing moment in our lives, and I also wanted to create something that was very personal. We wanted people to leave our wedding and say to themselves, ‘That was really them!’”

But in order for the ceremony to be repeated, it would have to take place in the first place…and half of the couple proved somewhat ambivalent toward that prospect. “Brian was okay going down to the courthouse and getting married there,” says Gerald, “but that wasn’t going to do it for me!”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 138











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Gerald intended to make a public statement of love, devotion, and Pride. "I wanted to incorporate themes of social justice, love, commitment, and family," he says. "We started wedding planning a year in advance and it all started with meeting with our friend Raed Kakish, who is also a top wedding planner in town and co-owns Indulge and Bloom. He gave us some ideas and we were off to the races. We really wanted to create a memorable and personable wedding."



Personal, individual details brought the ceremony into sharper focus. "Brian really enjoys the piano so we hired a pianist to perform some of our favorite songs on the piano as our guests arrived for the ceremony," Gerald reports. "Our guests were also greeted with a glass of champagne which really helped set the mood for the evening."

And then, *the* moment had arrived. "Brian and I walked down the aisle to 'Marry You' by Bruno Mars," Gerald says. "Our officiant was a friend of mine that I met at The Firm, and he absolutely exceeded my expectations of a ceremony program."

With the deed done, one surprising feeling superseded all others. "The one emotion that I certainly felt right away was calmness," Gerald reveals. "I was married and starting this new chapter in life with my husband, and I couldn't be happier. I am so excited to see what the future holds for us!"

While the ceremony was carefully crafted, the couple has found that the actual marriage requires more than a pinch of improvisation. Gerald opines, "The most important lesson was to recognize that there were going to be small issues along the way, but that we shouldn't let it ruin the day for even a second."

Contemplation reveals a fascinating synchronicity. "Our marriage is first and foremost a reflection of the love and respect we have for each other," Gerald states. "Our first date took place on August 1, 2013, which is the date that love became the law, so we also wanted to celebrate and have fun with that as well. And the white frosted cake that revealed a rainbow when cut open was just too fun to pass up!"

Gerald and Brian have since found themselves coming out again and again — not just as gay men, but as married gay men. "Like so many others, living openly and comfortably has been a journey for us," admits Gerald. "Outing ourselves has become second nature, as we'll drop comments about our husband without even thinking of it. Inevitably, anybody that spends more than a few minutes [with us] will figure it out, whether we are doing it consciously or not."

In the end, when the love story began doesn't really matter. The only thing that matters is that, from the looks of it today, the love story will never end.







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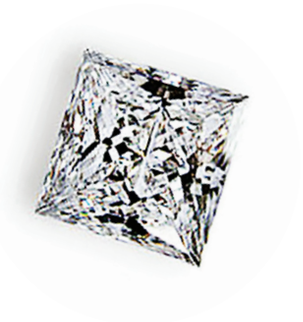
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WEDDING

By Kassidy Tarala

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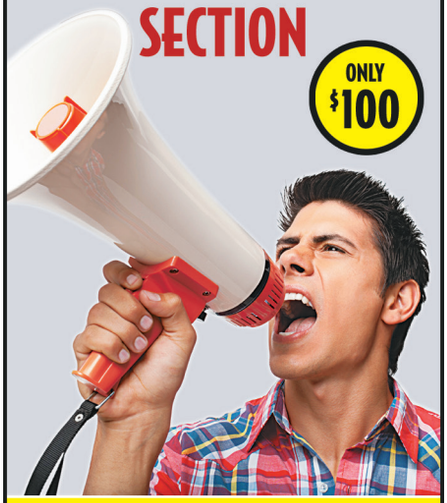
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While customers continue to buy both mined and ECO4 diamonds, the staff members at Wedding Day Diamonds have found that ECO4 diamonds are increasingly popular when compared side-by-side with mined diamonds. The traditional mined diamonds are offered in every shape and style available in the diamond market throughout the world. The ECO4 diamond collection is rapidly growing and is currently available in round, oval, pear, cushions, princess, and emerald cuts that grow as large as four carats plus. ECO4 diamonds are also available in a variety of different colors, so clients often prefer them when looking for more unique diamonds.

Additionally, the cost plays a big role in choosing the right diamond. ECO4 diamonds are typically 20–40 percent less expensive than a traditional mined diamond. For example, an average one-carat round mined diamond costs approximately $5,000, and a comparable ECO4 lab-grown diamond costs about $3,500. The price difference between mined and ECO4 diamonds often helps clients buy much larger diamonds for less.

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Photos courtesy of Second Chance Animal Rescue

"Single male, four legs and a tail, enjoys long walks around fire hydrants, chasing postal workers, and smelling scat; seeks two-legged, tailless M or F for lifelong friendship. Serious inquiries only."

This personal ad has never before appeared in print — let's hope it hasn't, anyway — but it could describe many of the potential companions currently affiliated with Second Chance Animal Rescue. Second Chance Animal Rescue is "an all-volunteer, nonprofit 501(c)(3) animal rescue organization dedicated to rescuing, caring for and providing homeless dogs and cats with a second chance at life and companionship."

At the center of Second Chance is one remarkable woman. "I am a co-founder and the president of Second Chance Animal Rescue," declares Nancy Minion. "We just celebrated 23 years of saving animal lives! Second Chance was one of the first rescues in Minnesota, and we strive each day to help as many animals as possible."

The situations requiring rescue are lamentably manifold. Says Minion, "Animal rescue is taking in animals from situations that are usually not the best for the animal, whether it is taking them out of animal control facilities before their 'time is up' and they are euthanized, or rescuing them from puppy or kitten mills, hoarding situations, cruelty cases, or helping families who can no longer care for their animals, and many other situations."

Sometimes, the first step is more of a reprieve than a rescue. "Like Second Chance, the vast majority of animal rescue organizations do not have a facility where dogs and cats have to live in cages and be alone at night," Minion discloses. "We utilize volunteer foster homes where the dogs and cats can bond with people and live in their homes. Many sleep in or on the beds with a human. They are taught commands and good behavior. They learn to have fun and enjoy life where they don't have to be afraid."

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 148

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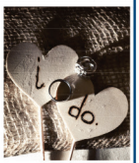
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an all-volunteer nonprofit organization, volunteers are the mainstay of Second Chance."

This shouldn't imply that the joint is run by a pack of rank amateurs, either. "We provide orientation, ongoing training, and support for our volunteers," Minion reports. "We ask that volunteers have basic animal care skills and have time in their lives to give the animals attention, loving care, and training."

That training — for the volunteers, not the companions — might be used in any number of ways, depending on the requirements of the present moment…or the moment after that. "We usually don't know what will arise any given moment that we need to respond to," Minion observes. "There is such a huge need for helping animals. One way we touch more animals than the ones we physically rescue is we provide grants to help low-income people spay or neuter their animals."



Each rescue is unique. "There is a lot that goes into saving a life," Minion admits. "Coordinating the intake by going to impound facilities or other locations, coordinating the vet appointments, caring for the animals in their homes, screening potential adopters, holding adoption events, attending community events, and so much more. We always say we can only save as many animals as we have foster homes available."

All of Second Chance's work takes place under the shadow of a great, cosmic clock. "Every day there are animals that need rescuing, and we, unfortunately, can't help them all," Minion sorrows. "It is difficult, but we have to stay focused on the ones we can help and save. We constantly need more foster volunteers so we can save more lives."

That said, Second Chance never gives in to desperation. "Our adoption contract requires that adopters properly care for the animals, keep them as house pets — not outdoor animals — not declaw cats, and return them to our program if they are unable to keep them," Minion recounts. "We also have a strict spay/neuter clause. If the animal is too young to spay or neuter at the time of adoption, we require the adopter bring it to one of our vets to have the surgery done within the timeframe we specify…and we pay for it. If they don't comply, we take the animal back."

The quantity of these adoptions is as impressive as their quality. Says Minion, "This varies monthly and yearly. It's hard to give a specific number but we have saved over 9,500 lives since inception and helped thousands more with our outreach work."

This outreach has been catalyzed in recent years by gadgetry of every stripe. "There have been so many changes in technology since we started which have helped connect potential adopters with our animals," Minion has noticed. "Having a website and being able to show adoptable animals online really helps get the public interested in a specific dog or cat by reading their personality profiles and seeing their pictures."

As useful as the internet is in connecting humans to companions, it's also helpful with connecting humans to other humans. Minion says, "Facebook is a great tool for us to let people know about our upcoming events, special rescues we are working on, highlight some of our long-term animals, and we reach more people."

Sometimes the human-to-human connections are of a more organic variety. "One of the things I really enjoy is Second Chance being asked to attend children gatherings — Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, birthday parties, etc. — where children are getting involved in helping animals at a young age," Minion reports. "They ask good questions and collect monetary donations and animal supplies to help our foster animals."

Rescuers oftentimes find themselves rescued by their rescuees. "Our volunteers get a great sense of accomplishment," Minion asserts. "They know they are literally saving lives. They get to see shy, sick, or ill-mannered animals turn around and thrive in their homes by just providing the basics of love, food, shelter, and positive reinforcement training. It is amazing to watch the transformations and preparing the animals to move on to their forever homes."

To Minion, animal rescue isn't merely her mission, it's her purpose. "My life is pretty much animal welfare when I'm not at my paying job," says Minion. "Growing up, my family always had dogs, guinea pigs, and gerbils, and we helped injured birds, squirrels, and other critters. Rescuing and helping animals is just part of my life and is so rewarding. Outside of Second Chance, I write and help pass animal welfare laws and ordinances in Minnesota and have been doing that for over 27 years. It is extremely fulfilling."

That fulfillment is most rewarding when shared. Minion encourages, "We are always in need of foster volunteers for dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens. Help us save more lives!" ■

For more information about the animals and work of Second Chance Animal Rescue, go to www.secondchancerescue.org.

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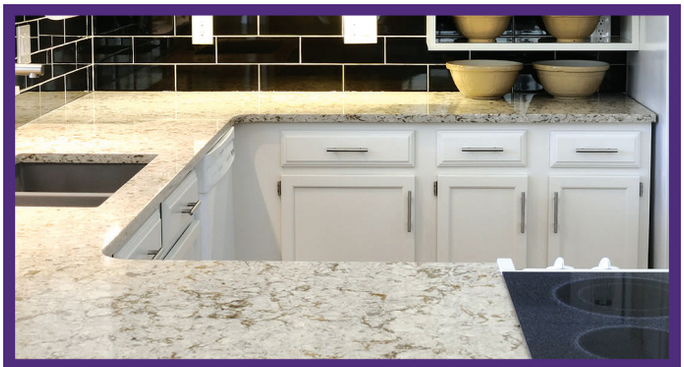
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By Mark Segal, PGN



VAPORIZING STONEWALL



This week, I'm writing about an issue that sheds new light on a subject we all think we know: Stonewall. Earlier this week, my husband Jason, who teaches creative writing at Boston University, handed me an anthology of the best science-fiction stories of 2016. The book, edited by John Joseph Adams, has a story by Sam J. Miller titled "The Heat of Us: Notes Toward an Oral History." It's literally a science-fiction account of Stonewall.

For any of us who were there, especially those of us who were members of Gay Liberation Front, which was built from the ashes of Stonewall, it's a personal story. After reading it, I sent the info of the story to our GLF email chain to get the reaction of my brothers and sisters who went through that time period.

The story takes a look at Stonewall from the eyes of fictitious people involved: police, eyewitnesses, participants, etc. However, the characters in the story perpetuate two of the myths about Stonewall that are dead wrong. Even though this is fiction, since this is a personal story for me, those myths are hard to overlook.

It starts with the idea that the riot happened due to Judy Garland's death. That is an insult to each and every LGBT person, then and now. It trivializes the riot and our actions, especially those of the street kids and trans people. Those in the club that night were mostly young, and Garland wasn't a part of our generation. We danced to Diana Ross, The Fifth Dimension, Barbra Streisand, and even The Beatles. I can't recall "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" ever being played at any time.

It was 1969, the height of the counter-cultural '60s. People our age were, as they say today, disruptive. What actually set off Stonewall was the police and the way they treated us. Very simply, that act forced out our anger and oppression of 200 years. Or, to put it personally, those police represented the hate we had endured, the rejection, the bullying, the beatings and the isolation each of us felt. It is an insult to that pain to even utter that a diva set us off. It belittles those involved.

I guess you see how strongly I feel about this issue.

There is one minor character in the story who does say that the riot had nothing to do with Judy Garland, but that perspective is only a few lines long.

In the story, the riot is the scene of science-fiction phenomena like collective pyrokinesis and multipsonics. My favorite line was when a character talks about all the people who got vaporized, and the smell of charred bodies as you entered the remains of the bar. The writer embellishes the scope of the riot and the damage. At this point, it amused me, and I wrote our GLF email chain.

Most of them have come to terms with Stonewall. It's personal for us, but that exchange helped me finally write, "OK, I'm literally sorry I brought up the vaporizing of Stonewall." Hey, I thought it would amuse everyone.

There's one point I've used over and over the last couple of years and for me it's a major one. I wrote it in my email and always say it in my recollections: "From the ashes of Stonewall came GLF, the most important LGBT organization that has EVER existed."

"First, as a group, we decided to define ourselves rather than allowing society to do so, and second, we created community where there was none before," I continued. "We did it all in the open, we blew the closet door wide open and embraced all in our community.

"So take great pride and know that you were in a very special organization with some incredible people. Stonewall is bigger than all of us, and our views are all different due to age and other factors. Whether you were in Stonewall before, during or after, it was GLF that took that spark and ran with it. And no matter how the story changes, no matter what is written to explain what happened or to explore the issues we were facing, the fact remains that we changed the world, and we changed it as a community."

Enough said. ■

Mark Segal is the nation's most award-winning commentator in LGBT media. His recently published memoir, And Then I Danced, *is available at Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, or at your favorite bookseller.*

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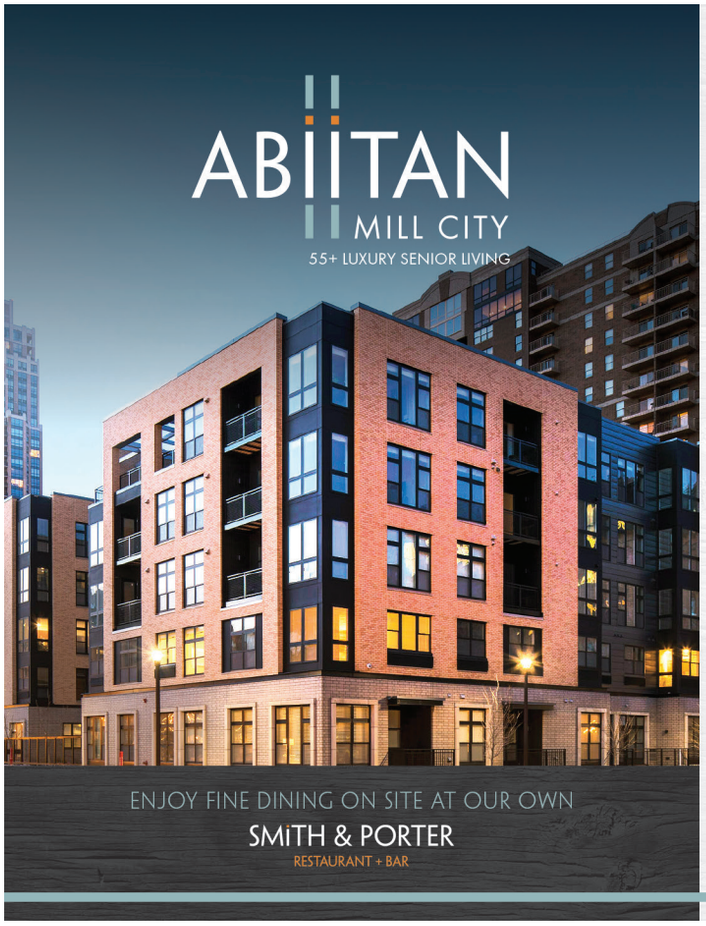
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By Terrance Griep

"WHERE THERE'S SMOKE"—

DEMOTED FIREFIGHTER **DAN BENSON** ALLEGES ANTI-GAY DEPARTMENTAL DISCRIMINATION

Dan Benson has made headlines in recent weeks, after being surprised by a demotion he received due to a poor performance review in his capacity as battalion chief for the Eagan Fire Department…but Benson disputes the review, noting that the loss of status occurred only after Benson outed himself. His allegations of bias and violation of his Constitutional rights has manifested as a civil lawsuit filed in U. S. District Court as the fire chief and city of Eagan deny these allegations. Benson spoke to *Lavender* about his side of the story.

You first wanted to be a firefighter when you saw a neighbor's house burn down. Do you mind if I ask how old you were? Do you know why you had that reaction, as opposed to thinking, "I think I'll avoid fire at all costs?"

Dan Benson: I was probably four or five — 1968 or 1969 — and we lived in White Bear Lake. I think we were coming home from Pizza Hut. A farmhouse was fully engulfed on a pitch black night. Then we passed a bunch of firetrucks headed to the fire. I thought that had to be a cool job — yet somehow I was scared of everything else.

Can you describe the most memorable fire you've fought?

DB: A couple years into my career one of the buildings at the Royal Oaks Apartments caught fire. It was a dry fall day and 40 mph winds pushed that fire so hard and fast through the building that it made it look like it was built from paper. We were searching for occupants and by the time we got to the third floor it wasn't even there anymore! We were outside! My right leg was so sore from kicking open doors that I couldn't walk for three days.

I noticed that you consider the other Eagan firefighters your brothers and sisters. Beyond that, can you describe the bond you share with other firefighters? What's unique about that bond?

DB: Teamwork is really the only way we can function. You get close by working together. You also see things that the average citizen will never see. You see people on the very worst day of their lives. When you share those experiences you become quite close. You support each other because most of us don't have someone at home who cares to hear about the fatal car accident you just came from. There is also the reward of sharing a successful "save" with your counterparts.

Photos courtesy of Dan Benson



CONTINUED ON PAGE 160

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What's the greatest or most common misconception people have about firefighters or firefighting?

DB: That we are all six feet tall and 200 pounds and can carry a human out of a burning building. Luckily, the scenario doesn't actually come up very often but it would take a lot of us to move a 150-pound human out of a bad situation. In truth, a few minutes in a smoke-filled building is gonna take your life anyway. Check your smoke detectors!

How much training is required? How much re-training is required?

DB: A full-time department can train a firefighter in a few months. A part-time department takes about a year. Add on time for specialties like EMT, Hazmat Tech, and officer positions. Training never ends. In order to keep up certifications you will train many hours each year. More time is spent training than on actual incidents.

Has firefighting changed during your tenure? If so, how?

DB: In the past ten years, lots of people have tried to make money off of strategies and systems to put out fires. Include with that liquid solutions and chemical bombs that supposedly make the job faster and safer. We all ended up going back to the basics of lots of water as quickly as possible. When I became a firefighter the individuals tended to be rather rugged and some a little redneck. That has changed to a more liberal, family-type based staffing.

As a battalion chief, you were responsible for hiring firefighters, yeah? If I've got that right, what traits did you look for in candidates?

DB: I hired or assisted in hiring over 50 of Eagan's firefighters (over half of the department). I looked for candidates that could hold a conversation and look me in the eye. I would give them a tour of the station before the interview to break the ice. I could usually tell by the end of the tour whether they would be hired or not. I searched for a sense of humor, too. If you take it all too seriously you will have a breakdown one day. I'd like to think I steered the staffing into a better group of people socially. We no longer have fistfights after calls!

GLBT people are commonly stereotyped. Are firefighters stereotyped?

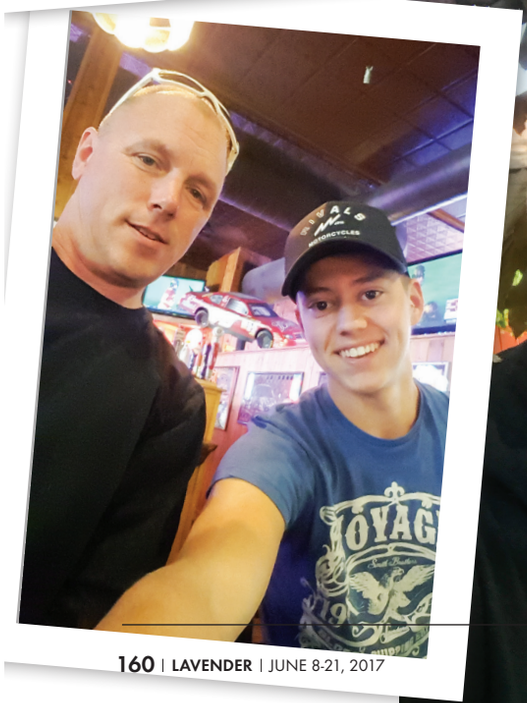
DB: Out of 9/11 came the theory that all police and firefighters are heroes. Unfortunately, people started signing up to be a hero and later realized heroes are to be humble and they didn't get the attention they

CONTINUED ON PAGE 162











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hoped for. Although it's nice to be acknowledged, I don't know one good firefighter that seeks to be idolized for his job. Is the job dangerous? Yes, it can be, but in the case of serious injury or fatality of firefighters, someone almost always made a very bad decision.

How does firefighting affect family life?

DB: I always said it takes about a third of your brain. It's always there. That pager is always on your belt. You miss some family time, your moods can be swung by certain incidents. You may have just come home from a bad call and your partner wants to finish the argument you were having before you left. But they are always proud of you. If they are not behind you 100 percent, you will either be leaving the job or leaving your partner.

Can you tell me about your family? You met your husband via personal ad years ago. Were you closeted? Was he? What was the relationship like? What's it like now? Why did you decide to get married, as opposed to some other arrangement?

DB: Greg Carlson: Iron Ranger, Finlander. A toxic combination! We were young. I had this Italian boyfriend for a few months and one day he stopped by with a buzz cut and took off to the army. Never heard from him again. So I'm seeing ads in the *Twin Cities Reader*. I answer a few. It takes, like, months for them to process the secure exchange of mail. I almost forget about it until one day a few letters arrive in a manila envelope. Two had pictures and had to be immediately excluded. The last one had no picture and about a single paragraph ending with "Call me if you want." I got shingles about this time and was home in bed for a while. I was bored, I called and we talked every day for hours. He was so caring about my condition. We wanted to meet but it was really a couple months before I felt better. Then we met at the old, original Champps on West Seventh. This was 1988. I think I moved into his condo a month later.

So, almost 30 years later, here we are in our same house for about 25 years. We've been through a dozen dogs and enjoy taking care of our home and having guests over to hang out by the pool. Ask any couple that has been together for a long time; you start to find some of your own passions — Greg with his Harley, me out with my friends — but we still have the comfort of coming home to each other at the end of the day. We married about three years ago. I think we would have been perfectly content as we were but as we all know the benefits are reason enough. It is nice to be married, though.

What would you like the world to know about your son-like exchange students?

DB: For years, I think we were substituting pets for kids. That worked for a while but I know that at least I yearned for a real kid around the house. My maternal instincts were not being fulfilled. I signed up for a mentor program in Dakota County where I was matched with a great six-year-old boy. I couldn't get enough of seeing him and at one point we broke off from the program and he started keeping a bedroom in our home. He's fourteen now and we have him with us as often as possible.

A few years ago I received a letter requesting a home for an exchange student who was interested in being a firefighter. I tossed it because I thought Greg would have no interest. I mentioned it that night and he got all excited. I managed to find the letter and a few months later we had our first exchange student, Tim from Germany. Not only was it fun but it gave Greg and me something of mutual interest, which is always important as your relationship gets on in years. This year we've had Santi from Spain and both these boys, including many of their friends, have been just like sons to us. It's hard to send them home but we have developed relationships that will last our lifetime. I work for an agency now that places exchange students. Those that I place become quite close to us as well.

Your demotion with the Eagan Fire Department occurred after having to "reapply" for your own job as battalion chief. What do you think would have happened if you hadn't volunteered your marriage status when reapplying for your job?

DB: Don't know because it didn't happen that way. I never "volunteered" any information. It was asked and I answered.

Why did you not come out earlier?

DB: I didn't see a need.

What else would you like *Lavender*'s readers to know about you?

DB: I stand up for what I believe in. When I tell my friends and family I love them I mean it. I don't have a single regret. ■



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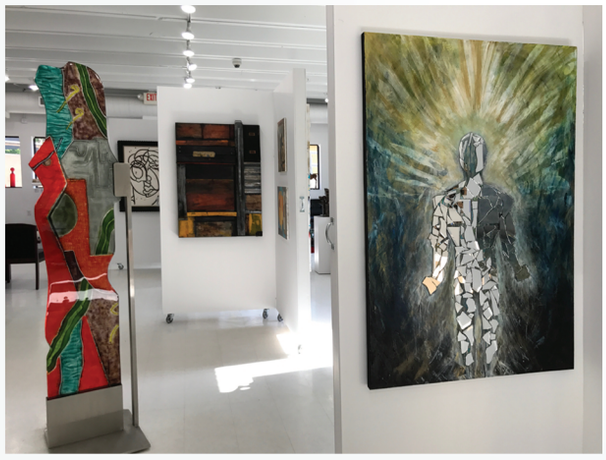

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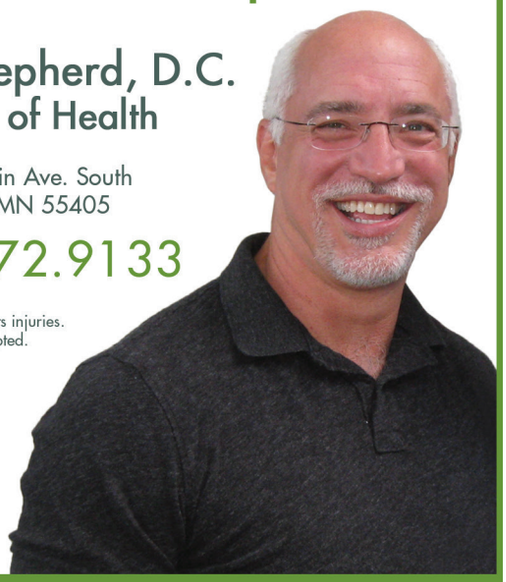
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It's 7 a.m., and I'm sitting at my desk in my office. Birds are starting to wake up outside my window. A hot cup of fresh coffee lets off steam amid a pile of pacifiers and toys. It's quiet — too quiet — and I consider checking on my sleeping baby for the millionth time. I resist, not wanting to tempt the fates in charge of keeping my baby asleep for an extra hour. I relish the quiet solitude and take advantage of the silence to write.

Just kidding.

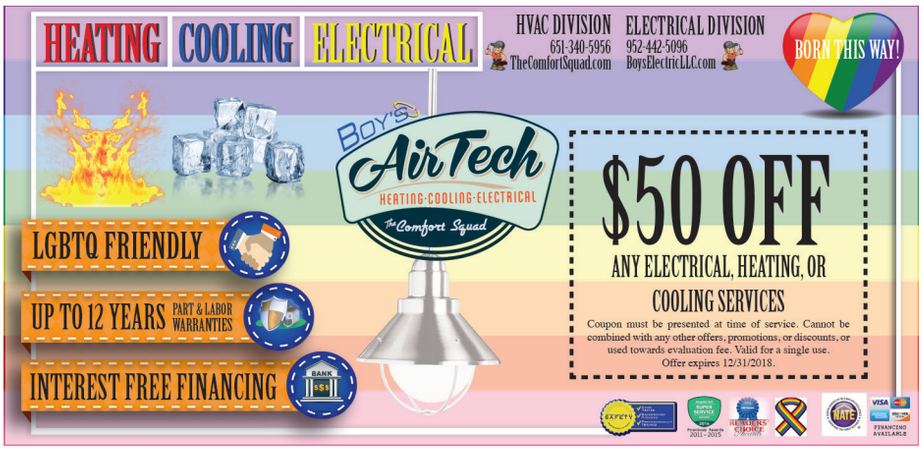
The baby monitor crackles as Peter wakes up. He lets out his good morning cry and I retrieve him. Five minutes of snuggles, a diaper change, and it's now "Take Your Kid to Work Day" at this home office. Not only will I be trying to beat multiple deadlines, but I'll also be wrangling the most adorably disruptive and distracting officemate known to man. I wouldn't have it any other way.

By the time this article goes to print, Peter will be six months old. In the grand scheme of things, six months is a relatively short amount of time. But looking back that far (heck, even reflecting on last week!) is like looking back into a completely different life. Days and nights are still kind of blurred together, moments go by too quickly, and it seems like Peter hits a new milestone everyday. It's easy to get caught up in the daily grind of diapers, laundry, feeding, et cetera ad nauseum, but taking

CONTINUED ON PAGE 172

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a minute to reflect reminds me just how lucky we are to be parents.

Krissy had a relatively easy pregnancy, but Peter stayed on past his due date. When he showed no intention of joining us in the outside world by 41 weeks, our midwife suggested an induction. We had planned for a natural birth with minimal medical interventions, but (as our wise elders told us) birth plans don't always work out. We checked into the maternity ward on a Friday evening with the naive expectation of having a baby by noon on Saturday. HA.

30 hours went by. We were unable to sleep, and we still didn't have a baby. Everyone was stressed and tired; there were minor complications, and we wanted to ensure Peter's safety. So our plan for a natural birth was thrown out the window. Around 4:30 on Sunday morning, we decided that a C-section would be the safest plan for Krissy and Peter.

I knew we were in the best hands possible, but nothing prepared me for the terror I felt when they wheeled Krissy out of the labor and delivery suite. I was alone in this huge room where we were supposed to welcome our son into the world, shaking as I donned my surgical scrubs. We were trading the dimmed lights and comforting decor of the labor suite for the harsh, sterile environment of a surgical room. This was not what we planned.

But, you know what? Everything turned out OK. Peter was born at 5:21 a.m. on December 4th. After a quick examination to make sure he was safe and healthy, we slowly walked him across the surgical floor to place him on Krissy's chest. We sang his lullaby to him as he nursed for the first time. It was more beautiful than I ever imagined a C-section could be.

Krissy came up with an apt description of the whole labor/childbirth/new mom scenario. Labor and childbirth are like running a marathon. But instead of resting when you're done, you immediately proceed to do an Ironman competition. With a tiny human clinging to you.

We had a few days of "recovery" in the hospital with Peter. And on the third day, they turned us loose; we were sent out into the big, scary,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 174



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snowy world with a fragile, perfect little baby boy. The duty of driving home from the hospital fell on my shoulders.

I am a chronically nervous driver; add no sleep and precious cargo to the mix, and I was a bit of a wreck. But this was something only I could do. It was one of the first moments where I felt like my family depended on me to protect them. I took that responsibility seriously.

We made it home safely, and that's honestly all I remember of the first few weeks. With the help of Krissy's mother and a village of friends who kept us fed and our house clean, we got through it. I never thought I would be so relieved to have someone come over to just hold Peter so I could shower or (if I was feeling really adventurous) throw in a load of laundry.

And too soon, we were expected to get back to life as usual. Krissy was lucky to have a long maternity leave, but I was back to work within a month. I got to ease back into reality since I work from home three days a week. But the first day away was surreal, and I swear when I came home Peter's hair was redder. It broke my heart to be missing out on his new adventures every day, but I feel very fortunate that I can be home as much as I am.

Krissy found the anticipation of returning to work worse than actually going back to the office. Nursing Peter had come to rule her day, and the thought of relinquishing that special bonding time was hard to accept. For Krissy, returning to work was like tearing a band-aid off quickly. She's still coming to terms with being absent most of the day, but being away is much more manageable than she thought it would be. And it makes those homecoming moments all the more special.

One of the coolest things about raising a tiny human is watching their personality develop. Somehow, we were blessed with a baby who loves show-tunes and zucchini. He's generally a happy kid and never wants to miss out on anything. (Of course, that all may change tomorrow.) Peter's fear-of-missing-out is great when we are out and about; he's curious and easily entertained even on the dullest of errands. But when it comes time for bed, that's a whole different story. He doesn't want to miss anything, and as much as we try to tell him that we really don't do anything past 8 p.m. anymore, he's determined to keep the party going.

It's also just mind-blowing to witness human development so closely. I'm amazed at what that tiny baby brain does, and we actually see him making progress. Brag alert: in one week, he learned to flip from his tummy to his back, splash in his bath water, put his pacifier back in his mouth, and sit unassisted for a brief time. Can you imagine an adult developing four new skills within such a short amount of time?! It's nothing short of amazing.

He's also much more expressive and aware, and he's determined to engage with everyone and everything he comes into contact with (OMG A COFFEE BAG OMG A MAXIPAD). He also reacts to Krissy and me differently. I can make him squeal and laugh with just a glance, but Krissy can comfort him instantly. And together, the three of us, are complete.

As wonderful as it is, I'm not going to pretend everything is all sunshine and rainbows over here. I came down with a pretty intense bout of cabin fever around Peter's five-month mark. I felt trapped in the house and overwhelmed by all the tasks I couldn't get done. I felt like I was failing at my job and failing at being a good mother to Peter. It was stewing inside me and spoiling every day I was at home. I was resentful that I was working, I was resentful that I was staying at home, I was downright resentful of everything.

The solution turned out to be simpler than I thought. I just had to be honest with Krissy about how I was feeling. It royally sucked having to admit that I felt overwhelmed and that I couldn't do everything I needed to do. I was scared to admit that I felt like a bad mom, but just getting that off my chest alleviated the burden of feeling like a failure. I realize that, as parents, we can never do everything we need to do, but we are capable of much more than we think we are. We are stronger than we think we are. And together, everything is manageable.

I feel pretty spoiled rotten that I have such an amazing partner. We tag-team the diaper changes that require four hands, we share particularly traumatizing poopy diapers on Snapchat, and we try to keep up with normal human things like groceries, laundry, and cooking. Our priorities have drastically changed; hobbies are still non-existent, but we know this is only temporary. Trading my gym time and Krissy's pottery time for hours with Peter is so worth it.

We are also blessed to have such a strong group of mothers and friends who help us out at the drop of a hat. Our mothers are thrilled to participate in Peter's life, and they visit as much as possible. Peter has too many "aunties" to count, and we have so many people we can lean on when we need support.

We also live in a neighborhood with fantastic mothers around every corner. One particularly rough morning, I was relieved to find a neighborhood mom on my bus to work. I hadn't slept, I can't remember if I showered, and my coffee was sitting on the counter at home. But Becky was there on the bus, offering words of encouragement and telling me that I was strong enough to get through the rough early months. It's comforting knowing that we have some awesome mom-friends nearby who are always willing to encourage us on this journey of parenthood.

As one mom in a two-mom household, I've been ready to pull my claws out to defend our family. But surprisingly, we haven't heard anything negative about our family at all. If someone asks a question about Peter's birth, I usually feel comfortable sharing our story. This willingness to share is surprising to me because I am normally defensive about my privacy. But I also believe in the importance of celebrating all types of families, so I try to share our experience if people seem genuinely interested. It's important for everyone to remember that there are so many ways to make a family.

And speaking of family, Minnesota is great in that I was able to sign Peter's birth certificate as a parent. But given our current political climate, we decided that we wanted to make sure all of our bases were covered. Our family lawyer is helping me go through the process of fully adopting Peter. It's incredibly strange to think about someone evaluating whether or not I'm a fit parent to a child I've cared for every single day of his life, but the adoption process is necessary for us to feel completely safe and protected as a family.

Everything we do now takes at least twice the amount of time that it used to. Gone are the days where I can focus 100 percent on my work or even get things done in a timely fashion. (Case in point: as I was typing this paragraph, Peter demanded a story. Ten minutes later, back to the writing grind.)

But as much as I love being productive, I love being involved with Peter more. I love seeing his face light up as I sing or do my best Julie Andrews impression. When he squeals with delight and screeches, it makes my mediocre job performance worth it.

As parents, we can't do it all. There will always be some piece of clothing covered in last night's dinner that needs laundering. There will always be dog hair on the floor. There will always be sacrifices made in order to meet the minimum requirements of survival. But I resent anyone who says we can't have it all, because that comes down to what you define as all. My all is my family, our health, and hope for our future. And by my definition of all, I have it. ■

This is a follow-up to a piece Kathleen wrote in our 2016 Pride Issue about experiences she and Krissy were having with pregnancy: "Things No One Tells You About Lesbian Pregnancy: A Non-Bio Mom-To-Be's Experience with the Miracle of Life." Find it on www.lavendermagazine.com.

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INTERNATIONAL

By Shane Lueck

MoSAIC:

HELPING LGBT ENTREPRENEURS LIVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Over 70 countries criminalize same-sex relationships. The severity of penalties for homosexuality in these countries range from paying fines to the death penalty. Imprisonment is a common form of penalty, while corporal punishment is also imposed in some areas.

Yet the Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center (MoSAIC) was created to help global LGBT entrepreneurs thrive. "What makes MoSAIC different is that we're taking risks where this international community of LGBT rights advocates don't want to take risks," says Nick Alm, MoSAIC's co-executive director. "We do go to the ground, and we confirm with them that they're willing to take these risks to be out and to start these businesses. They know the climate better than anybody and we're not going to tell people don't start a pig farm in Uganda because you're going to be targeted. I'm inspired continuously by these people because they're out and they don't care."

Named for Kevin Mossier, a Minnesotan entrepreneur and philanthropist who devoted his time and profits to furthering equality for the LGBT community, MoSAIC works with Minnesota-based companies and individuals to fund LGBT entrepreneurial projects internationally.

"If Cargill is in Kenya, how are they incorporating LGBT into their operations over there and how can we essentially help these people get off the ground and start their own human rights movements, but do it through an economic empowerment angle?" asks co-executive director Charlie Rounds. "Not a lot of organizations fight to get money in the hands of these individuals the way that *they* want to do it."

Taking cues from local LGBT entrepreneurs, MoSAIC's inter-

Photo by Claire Psarouthakis

CONTINUED ON PAGE 180

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national projects range from a trans-led pig farm in Uganda, travel industry training by Marriott for young LGBT people in the Dominican Republic, a lake resort retreat in Kenya for East African LGBT refugees, and a cyber center training LGBT refugees at Kakuma refugee camp.

"LGBT youth empowerment here in Minnesota is the other half of the coin," Alm says. "We essentially create internship opportunities and professional development opportunities for students here in Minnesota working with these entrepreneurs internationally. What that does is get them international experience. We can produce internships very unique to what you would be able to find going to a Fortune 500 company or a nonprofit here in the Twin Cities."

Through these experiences, Alm says young LGBT leaders will then take those skills into the working world with an elevated sense of what is needed in the LGBT movement globally, moving forward. "We really do believe that the next generation of LGBT leaders needs to be focused globally as well as locally," he adds. "The tendency is for people to focus on Minnesota, they don't want to focus internationally, and for a lot of good reasons based on everything that's going on. But we're going to try to do both at the same time, because that's what the future demands."

With entirely unique business landscapes in each project location, Rounds stresses the importance of listening to the people doing the work. New projects seeking funding come to MoSAIC through highly trusted contacts that Rounds has known through his wealth of experience abroad.

"I just go in with a blank slate," he says. "I sit down and ask what they want and how we can help. LGBT rights have to come up from the bottom, they have to be worked internally. The term we use is organic. You can't come in with the Human Rights Campaign in Nairobi and go, 'Let's have a black tie dinner, where's the movie stars and let's get them on some ads.' It's not going to work in Kenya. They have to win the hearts and minds and then change laws in their own countries. They have to lead it. But they've gotta have access to employment. That's what people said."

Alms nods in agreement, adding, "We go in with the assumption that if they want to do a chicken farm or a pig farm or a cyber cafe teaching computer skills to people, that that's the correct thing to do. And then we just ask, in two years, will this employ 50 people, 100 people, and how do we get to that point? And then we do the work here to say: 'OK, Land O'Lakes, you give money to agricultural-based projects in these countries. We've got three of them here who are amazing and we want you to fund that project, but then also fund people here to assist with whatever technical assistance, or figure out the sourcing/importing process, or whatever it may be.' We just make connections, really, to find out how to connect those people with the individuals or organizations who are going to accelerate them."

Those connections are not random, they have to make sense. Another project MoSAIC works with is a group of Kenyan immigrants here in Minnesota importing lavender tea from Kenya, with profits returning to people across the ocean. With more than 10,000 Kenyans living in Minnesota and the University of Minnesota's strong relationships with universities in Kenya, there is already a strong link between the two locales.

Yet, with the laws often working against them, it may seem the lo-



Photo by Claire Psarouthakis



Photo by Claire Psarouthakis



Photo by Shun Matsuhashi

cal entrepreneurs are fighting an uphill battle. Alm says, "I've stopped asking questions about if they're sure they want to do it. They don't have time for it and they don't care."

Rounds confirms, "We have to take risks. Continuing to do things the same way is just not going to work. The key is, we don't talk the language of politics. We talk the language of economic growth. Even the most conservative people, it's hard to get them to argue with economic growth. You have to talk to them in their language, not our language."

In philanthropy and international development, Rounds says things are slowly moving toward the notion that you cannot come in with a Western-based model and expect it to work locally. "The reality is, they know what works, and you gotta respect that; you can't just come in and impose your ideas," he says. "The challenge with international development is, many times, how can it benefit the company that's sending them? Part of the problem was, instead of saying how can we truly help locally, it's how can we help locally but make sure we're getting something out of the pie? That's not going to work anymore; it's got to be organic, it's got to be them. Otherwise it's a flawed model. There's this industrial philanthropic complex in New York and Washington. People are making multiple six-figures to go look at what's going on on the ground. That's just not a model. It can't work that way anymore."

MoSAIC will certainly look at financial statements and ROI, but Alm says he'll be looking at the number of people employed and at their stories as gauges for success.

"Success to me has always been based on are we creating jobs or not?" he says. "We set out to create jobs, to get capital to people who need it. As we begin to realize some more returns on these investments, it will be the stories that come out of it. The people employed, what they did with that job. It's going to be way more story-based."

One such story that's emerged as a measure of success comes from the Kenyan tea project. Searching for a new hire in western Kenya, the business owners (five heterosexual Kenyan men) said their top three candidates scored highly in all of their search criteria. Yet one woman emerged as the top candidate due to her passion to defend minorities including women, children, and LGBT. The woman, Diana, said it best: "Like anybody else, these minorities have the right to be who they want to be and to live their full potential." ■

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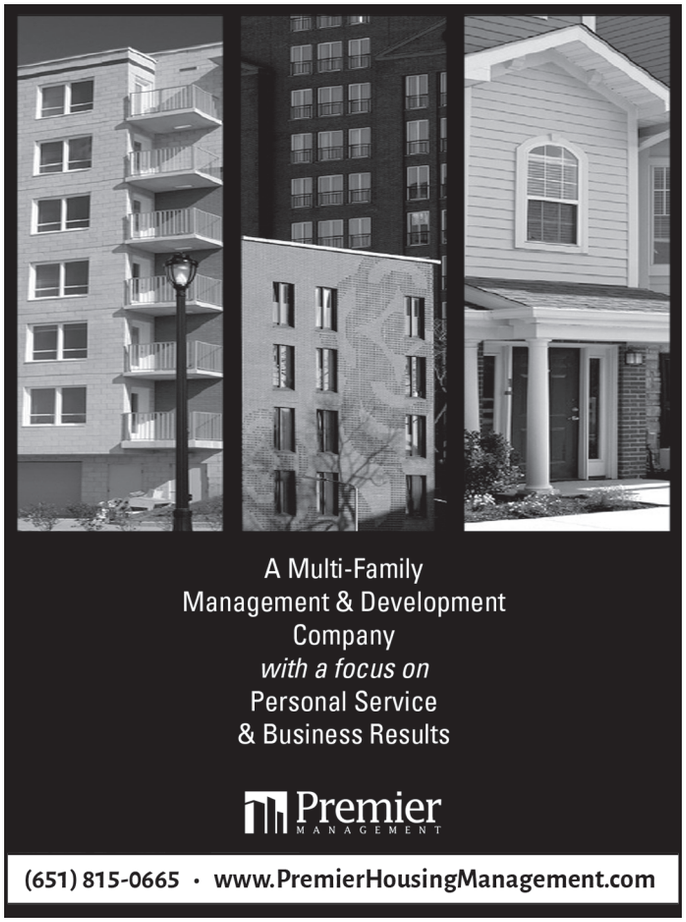
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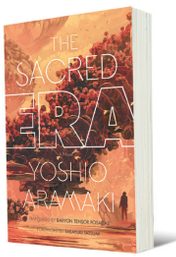




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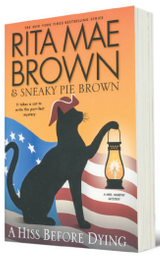
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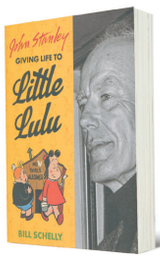
A tale that includes a past history of a parched and barren Earth might seem an obvious trope for today, but the author of *The Sacred Era* (Shinseidai) was born in Japan in 1933, while *Era*, considered his magnum opus, was written in 1978. A work of speculative fiction, the book melds the post-apocalyptic with space travel, religion, heresy, family, romance, and sex. In a distant future, youthful protagonist K arrives at the Papal Court of the Holy Empire of Igitur to take the Sacred Exam. He succeeds, and passes on through far worlds, mysterious, dream- and nightmare-like, and trackless space to planet Bosch, a giant, floating plant world where…where it's best to hie yourself and personally experience K's epiphany with the assumed centuries-dead heretic Darko Dachilko.

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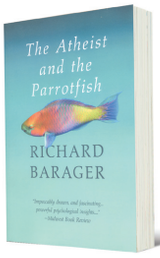
Brown and Brown take the reader again to Crozet, Virginia, for their 26th mystery alternating adventures of present day inhabitants (particularly human sleuth "Harry" Harristeen and cats Mrs. Murphy and Pewter with Corgi, Tee Tucker) with the town's 18th century founders. Now, the animal posse finds an eyeball and strip of skin on their wanderings, while a wealthy private investigator and art collector's corpse is found nearby. Native American art thefts, slave chits used by earlier citizenry, and the lives of original owners and slaves are woven skillfully into this intriguing tale. As always, the Browns make the history of the area and the lives of the departed, on whose lands Harry and the others live and whose toil created their town, as absorbing as the present.

John Stanley: Giving Life to Little Lulu
Bill Schelly
Fantagraphic Books
$39.99



John Stanley's personal life is more opaque than many of his contemporaries. In this oversized volume with many color illustrations, Bill Schelly, author of several other excellent biographies, here presents what is known through interviews with Stanley, his son, Jim, and others. Stanley started as an opaquer for Max Fleischer in 1934, moved on to Western, illustrating Tom and Jerry for Our Gang Comics. Litte Lulu, created by Marjorie (Marge) Lyman Henderson in 1935, came to Stanley through Western in 1944; the rest is history. He both wrote and drew from 1945 to '59, writing for himself (or co-worker Walt Kelly), "but never the faceless mass of kids." And it shows. Schelly writes clearly and accessibly, never letting his ardor for his subject slide into fanboy apotheosization.

The Atheist and the Parrotfish
Richard Barager
Evolved Publishing
$16.95



Science and religion; often strange bedfellows. Stories here twine around nephrologist Cullen Brodie, his patient and heart-kidney transplantee, Ennis Willoughby, and others whose past lives and sins drive their various, often compulsive, behaviors. Ennis, 63, a somewhat down-and-out is a cross-dresser who finds that he will be a recipient. Unusual in these cases, Brodie knows the donor, his superior's daughter-in-law, wife of a co-worker. Ennis begins to get "messages" from his new organs and divines, correctly, her gender and name, her favorite tastes. Atheist Brodie poo-poohs Ennis's rantings, putting them onto his guilt at cross-dressing as "Elaine," (who he feels is antagonistic to donor Carla) but he, too, is immersed in old guilts and misdemeanors. In this tale, religion (Roman Catholicism) wins the day. ■


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HOME & GARDEN

By Rachel Oelke



SUMMER HOME TRENDS WITH GALLERIA EDINA

Home is where you hang your hat, so make sure that stylish sunhat has a chic home to match with fresh summer updates. The Galleria Edina home stores are here to help with ideas and tips on what to look for in home decor and entertaining this season. Between home store musts like Restoration Hardware, Crate & Barrel, Pottery Barn, and Arhaus, and local favorites like Ampersand and Gabbert's, Galleria is a home decor devotee's dream and obvious authority on the subject of all things home. Insider tip: the Galleria Williams-Sonoma recently renovated to include their amazing fine furniture line, and it's the first Williams-Sonoma store in the state to offer a complimentary interior design consultant on site.

Moody Blues — From cobalt to deep navy, blue is the hue of choice this season when it comes to summer entertaining. Classic blue and white vintage patterns have reemerged in tabletop and blue botanicals and blooms give this classic trend a new twist.

Cheerful Accents — Taken from the runways, exciting extras like pompoms, tassels, and embroidery help add an eclectic element to both apparel and home decor this summer. A pompom-edged table runner or embroidered throw are interesting additions to add some punch to your palace.

Mixed Naturals — Bring the outdoors in with home elements made from organic materials like wood, metal, and stone; terra cotta is the earthenware standout this season. Mix and match these elements to give a natural aesthetic a modern feel. Also, add actual greenery to your interior spaces with wall vases and terrariums.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 192

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Unexpected Textures — Texture is an easy update to add interest to any room with woven rugs, tactile pillow fabrics, and even furniture pieces with unique finishes or ornate details. Layering different textures in the same color scheme is also an update that's unique and interesting to the eye.

Artisanal Inspiration — Unique, one-of-a-kind decor elements are a must for adding an element of interest to your space. Look for hand-blown vases, ceramics, handcrafted porcelain, or wood working wonders that fit with your home's personality.

Upscale Outdoor — Time to toss your paper plates and plastic cups. The picnic has gone fancy this season with leather-handled baskets, chic wine coolers, galvanized extras, and gorgeous melamine dinnerware that will make you do a double take (it looks like real china!). The backyard will become your new dinner party headquarters.

White Marble — Marble accents are still hot this season, from gorgeous tabletops to unique planters to luxe kitchen basics like cheese boards and dipping bowls. This timeless material looks even more glamorous when paired with metals like brass or copper.

Quirky Prints — Fun prints and patterns aren't just reserved for your kiddo's bedroom this season; add a splash of whimsy to your decor this summer with flamingos, butterflies, fruit, and fantastic florals. As is the rule with all entertaining things, the key to this trend is to use in moderation.

Metallic Mainstay — Metals continue to shine on this season in home lighting and fixtures, kitchen accessories, and more. A big trend the last few years, copper is now an everyday staple with copper cookware, flatware, drinkware, and even kitchen electrics (the iconic KitchenAid mixer just landed at William-Sonoma in a gorgeous copper!). You'll spot warm metallics like gold and brass also reemerging, and don't be afraid to mix cool and warm metal accents in the same room. ■

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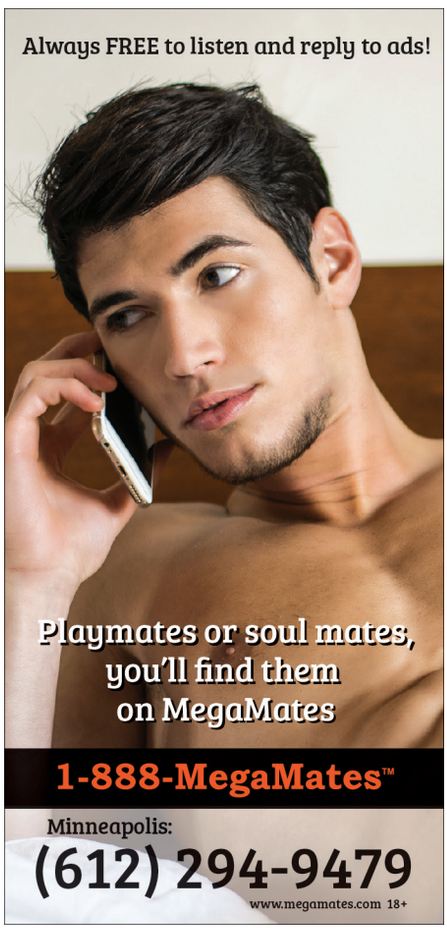
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OSSEO POWERSPORTS

RIDE REVIEW

By Randy Stern / Photos by Randy Stern

2017 MINI COUNTRYMAN



It seems that everyone is offering a crossover/SUV these days.

This is not a bad thing, really. Consumers want them and the manufacturers offer them to fulfill those wants and needs. It is a simple lesson in commerce.

From there, each offering has to be distinctive in styling, performance, capability, practicality, technology, and in providing the highest level of safety available. These are all easy to engineer and design, right?

Yes and no. But, who says that a crossover/SUV has to look, drive, and interact with its owner like everyone else?

For 2011, MINI introduced the Countryman. It was a moment that engaged with its owner and fan base, while the rest of the automotive and consumer world scratched their heads. There was proof that MINI made everyone notice: in 2012, one in three new vehicles sold was a Countryman. By 2013, 31 percent of all new car registrations for MINI were Countryman. In all, you may mark this "stretching of the brand" model a success.

For 2017, MINI introduced a new Countryman. The formula continued as such: a design rooted form the original Hardtop model, but with four-door access, a large liftgate, and space for five people and whatever they want to bring with them. It also offered the current engine range and the option of ALL4 all-wheel drive. This formula worked successfully from 2011 to 2016 in the original Countryman. It appears that they may have perfected it for this new one.

In this current round of product renewals at MINI, we found there was more involvement from parent BMW in the development of each new model. In the Countryman, BMW lent not only the platform from its X1 SUV, but the two engines they developed for MINI's lineup and other key components and technologies the German company developed for the entire group. The Countryman is produced in the Netherlands, something that is sort of a reality for even an iconic British brand.

The basics of the Type F60 Countryman are that of an enlarged MINI Hardtop, applied to the BMW X1 platform — the UKL2 — and shaped accordingly. Compared to the previous model, the Countryman retains its upright body stance, but with some athletic and aggressive touches throughout. The roof area rearward of the C-pillar looks stretched, the front end molded aggressively, and the tailgate has been redone to put the license plate on it. In all, it looks more distinctive than the previous Countryman.

The formal name of our tester is the 2017 MINI Cooper S Countryman ALL4. In short, we'll call it the Countryman. However, we like the details that the Cooper S brings to the Countryman. The grille texture, the side grilles on the front bumpers, and the 18-inch alloy wheels bring out more of the Countryman's personality. What we love even more is the paint scheme on our tester: Chestnut with black roof and mirror caps. There is something about it that makes this Countryman pop even more.

For MINI aficionados, the interior design is iconic. As we pointed out in our last review of a MINI — the Clubman — the center speedometer is no longer, it's been replaced by the MINI Connected infotainment system. The speedometer, along with the tachometer, gas gauge, and information screen, is attached to the adjustable steering column. Switches

CONTINUED ON PAGE 198


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range from old fashioned toggles to modern switches, all within the MINI's design theme befitting its personality. That also includes a series of switches, along with MINI's version of the iDrive knob, that links back to the MINI Connected screen.

The MINI Connected 5.0 system is perhaps the biggest improvement on the Clubman. It is of the latest generation with an improved home screen, better color coding for functions, and BMW's latest navigation system on board our tester. Choose the Harmon/Kardon 12-speaker, 410-watt system and you get superb sound inside the Countryman.

The front seats offer deep bolstering, while maintaining maximum comfort. It is also adjustable for height, rake, and recline. Rear seat space is superb with loads of headroom and great legroom for tall people. Occupants in both rows of seats will enjoy the available panoramic roof with a sliding shade for each row. The cargo hold is flexible, starting with 17.6 cubic feet in covered cargo behind the seat expanding to 47.6 cubic feet with the rear seat folded down. This also includes underfloor storage in the back.

Like the rest of the MINI lineup, you can get the Countryman with a choice of two engines. Cooper models get a 134-horsepower, 1.5-liter, turbocharged three-cylinder engine, while the Cooper S gets the 189-horsepower, 2.0-liter, turbocharged four-cylinder engine. The Cooper S is truly the choice of the Countryman. Our tester came with an eight-speed automatic transmission with the ALL4 all-wheel drive system. The driveline is just fine for this vehicle, considering it only weighs 3,671 pounds. We were unable to measure fuel economy, but the sticker states that we should average 26 MPG with this tester.

There are three drive modes to choose from by a switch at the bottom of the shifter. Select Green or Medium and you get a nice, smooth ride, though it comes with a soft steering feel and plenty of roll through some hard curves. Switch to Sport and things improve for the better. The steering feel becomes heavier and more controlled, while the suspension tightens up for better curve management. However, Sport mode still offers a very smooth ride with a lot of dampening from potholes and cracks on the roadway.

With steering weight comes great turning precision and response. The system reacts to road feel and enables a tight turning radius for better maneuverability. The brakes are good with great pedal feel and response. We were unable to do panic testing on these brakes. The Countryman has a reputation for being safe. This vehicle offers a rearview camera, parking sensors, rain-sensing wipers, a head-up display, and adaptive cruise control, among other active safety features.

Base price for the Countryman lineup is $26,600. For the Cooper S ALL4 model, that base price goes up to $31,600. Our tester is fully loaded with a sticker price of $40,090.

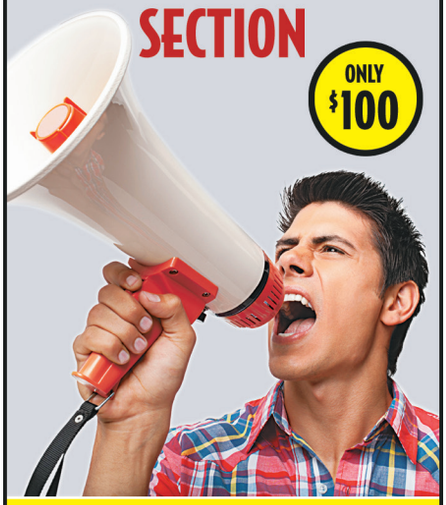
The sum of the vehicle is quite simple: the MINI Countryman works as a crossover that will take people wherever they want to go in a fun, fashionable way. That's just scratching the surface. As a premium product, it offers a higher level of quality, technology, and performance that will attract both loyal and new customers to the MINI brand.

To offer something in a hot market segment, one has to be different. That is something the MINI Countryman accomplishes quite easily. But, can it satisfy its owners and deliver on the promise of practicality, capability, and overall satisfaction? If you already love what MINI offers to their customers, then the short answer is "yes." However, if you are not convinced, one drive in a Countryman will definitely provide you with that answer. ■



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RIDE REVIEW

By Randy Stern / Photos by Randy Stern

It's What We Drive

Mini



Kia



Subaru



Five years ago, we asked you about your automobiles. We wanted to see which vehicles we identify with the most among the hundreds sold every year.

We found that we were attracted to certain brands, based on marketing and advertising that catered to us. We also found that certain vehicles among those brands took precedence over other products that might fit better budget-wise. Still, we followed some conventions — some might call them "stereotypes."

In the automotive business, if you can fit behind the wheel, that automobile is yours! Somehow, we believe that is still the case five years later. So many "Ride Reviews" and articles pertaining to the automotive cycle — from manufacturing to sales to ownership — point to one thing above all: as GLBT people, we still rely on our automobiles to get around. Some of us have even loved them as enthusiasts or even further in vehicle activity.

One thing does become clear, we have a connection with our vehicles. Even on days when they do not work, we are still connected with them. When they do work, and superbly, the greatest pleasure in motoring comes out. Just like Pride!

Chevrolet Bolt EV



This time around, we crowdsourced on social media to find out whether our original list from five years ago still stood the test of time. We still wanted to know what vehicles do we still identify with as GLBT people. Well…we found out some very interesting things that definitely evolved in the six years of regular automotive coverage in *Lavender* magazine.

First of all, the number of automotive brands that are reaching out to us has expanded. Mercedes-Benz made a splash through a recent video that featured a male couple with one of their newest products. At the New York International Auto Show, the German luxury car brand hosted a VIP night for the GLBT community. We are now seeing that Mercedes-Benz has taken a leadership role in steering GLBT consumers toward their products.

Also recently, MINI has featured GLBT-themed advertising as part of their marketing approach. The result has been evident since MINI's arrival into the USA some 15 years ago. We have flocked to MINI's products during this entire span and continue to do so. The inclusive commercial, print, and social media campaign simply affirmed their synergistic relationship between the brand and the consumer.

Fiat 124 Spider



Over the years, General Motors, Toyota, and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles provided opportunities for our consumers to engage with particular brands. In recent years, we have seen efforts from Fiat, Buick, Chevrolet, and Cadillac through both national and local campaigns across the country.

Meanwhile, Subaru remains the top brand among GLBT automotive consumers. Being one of the first to advertise and reach out to us, the return on investment is a high identification with their vehicles and its owners. We helped make the Outback wagon and the Forester SUV the brand's sales leaders, as well as the standard bearing vehicle in our community. Most of Subaru's products have GLBT owners, including the high performance WRX STi.

We also know that Volkswagen is strong with GLBT consumers. This could be traced back to the original Beetle, since it was a sign against convention in American society. The counterculture took the Beetle and the Bus going back to the 1960s. We simply carried over that spirit well into the 1970s. Today, the newest Beetle, Jetta, and Golf/GTI models are among the latest vehicles with a high number of GLBT consumers.

Volkswagen Jetta

There were some surprises within our crowdsourcing. In the 1990s and 2000s, Saturn was an affordable way for everyone to own a solid automobile. Their demise in 2009 left GLBT Saturn owners to find other vehicles that offered up personality and affordability to purchase and own. Since then, Mitsubishi and Kia has filled the void. This is seen lo-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 202



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cally, as well as nationwide.

Two models actually stand out; both just happen to compete against each other. First, there's the Kia Soul, a funky, box-like crossover/wagon that offers the same kind of feeling the Saturn did before it. It is highly functional and offers plenty of personality, traits that we actually like in our vehicles. The Soul also happens to be one of Kia's biggest selling models in the U.S.

Locally, we have seen a high number of Mitsubishi Outlander Sports in our community. This is primarily due to a single dealer in town. This response to a single model shows another thing GLBT consumers do to support businesses that are run by people within our community. If we see an advertisement in this magazine, would we most likely patronize said business to get what we need and/or want? Most likely, yes.

Mitsubishi Outlander Sport





If you scan through what we listed so far, one could make the argument about stereotyping on some level. GLBT consumers are just like everyone else. We have our needs and wants and will consult our friends, co-workers, and neighbors on what their experiences were with a particular vehicle; however, we do gravitate to brands that welcome us more than others.

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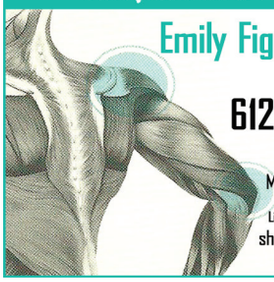
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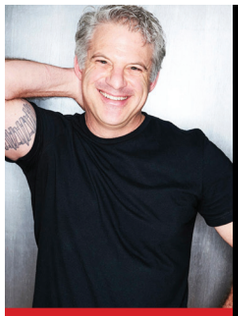


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SKIRTING THE ISSUE

By Ellen Krug

Pride 2017: Random Thoughts

In this Pride month 2017, I have some random thoughts, queer and otherwise.

First, after recently moving into a new condominium in downtown Minneapolis, I attended my first condo association meeting only to delightfully find that many of my fellow unit owners are extremely cute men married to other cute men. There are also two adorable late twentysomething guys a couple floors below me whom I often see sharing a jacuzzi-sized puffy-pillowed love seat that's centrally located on their tenth floor patio. "Ellen," one of them yelled the other day, "we'd love to get to know you."

While I look forward to becoming acquainted with my new neighbors, I'm also reminded of how far we've come as humans who want to love and be loved. The anti-marriage amendment battle is a distant memory; was it really just five years ago?

Think about that.

Separately, my oldest daughter recently came out. Well, sort of.

Those who've read my memoir know that I use "Emily" as this daughter's pseudonym, in part to protect her and in part because it took her several years to overcome her shame and hurt over my gender transitioning. Still, even after our reconciliation, "Emily" was very reluctant to acknowledge publicly that she was my daughter (for example, she never shared with her best friend that I was transgender). That was fine with me; simply having my daughter back was all that mattered.

I had thought that's where things would stay: "Emily" fully in my life, but still in the closet relative to letting anyone know that she had a transgender parent.

"Emily" has turned out to be a writer like me (although unlike her parent, she's far more naturally talented). She recently began writing under her true name for Book Riot, an online book review site. One of her first pieces, titled "When Your Parent Writes a Memoir," details how she's an unwitting subject in my memoir. After acknowledging that she's my daughter ("But, hell, cat's out of the bag now…Hi, I'm Emily"), she writes:

So, what is it like knowing that there are strangers across the U.S. who are now privy to your family's secrets? Well, to be fair, they're not really secrets anymore. And, frankly, it shouldn't have to be a secret. There's no shame in being your true self. As a writer, I understand the desire to tell your story — especially if your narrative is one that a majority of society still don't quite understand. In a world of Bathroom Bills and bullying, I think it's important that these stories and individuals are given an outlet.

My daughter's name is Kate.

Thank you for showing up, Kato, fearless and honest. You rock!

Moving on, whenever I speak about what it means to be transgender (I have a "Trans 101" presentation), I ask for a show of hands from audience members who know a trans person. Five years ago, at best, 20 percent of people in the audience raised their hands. Since then, more and more hands are being raised: 40, 50, sometimes even 70 percent of the total number of people in the room. Recently, as I presented to a group of 30 or so lawyers, everyone (100 percent!) raised their hands to reflect that they know someone who's transgender.

Are the higher numbers because Caitlyn Jenner's convinced a bunch of cisgender (non-transgender) dudes that wearing a Catalina bathing suit is cool?

I strongly doubt it.

What Caitlyn's done (along with Laverne Cox, Chaz Bono, and thousands of other trans role models) is show that it's possible to live authentically as one's true self, despite a society that doesn't fully "get it." This isn't any different from how gay and lesbian folks started appearing in greater numbers after Stonewall in 1969. Heck, depending on where you live in the U.S., coming out as a G or L today is relatively no big deal. In some instances, it might evoke the response, "Congratulations! Now, can you please pass the salt?"

Someday coming out as trans will produce the same reaction. I won't be around for that day, but so what?

Finally, it was two years ago while watching the Pride Parade in downtown Minneapolis that I took my last drink. I'd like to say that I can remember what kind of alcohol it was, but I can't. Hence part of the reason why I've been sober ever since.

It's not been easy and, for sure, I still yearn for a nice big glass of chardonnay on Sunday afternoons. Still, knowing that I'm not alone — we on the GLBT alphabet are particularly prone to substance abuse issues — makes it a bit easier. What's more, I'm accountable to many sober queer people. For those folks who have my back, I am very thankful.

Happy Pride 2017 everyone! ■

Ellen (Ellie) Krug is the author of Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change *(2013). She speaks and trains on diversity and inclusion topics; visit www.humaninspirationworks.com where you can also sign up for her newsletter. She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com.*